The British Empire and Tibet, 1900–1922

Wendy Palace

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In August 1904 Sir Francis Younghusband's invasion force reached the forbidden city of Lhasa. The British invasion of Tibet in 1903 acted as a catalyst for change in a world transformed by revolution, war and the rise of a new order.

The Thirteenth Dalai Lama had already fled and the approaching winter allowed only a brief stay in the city. For Britain the decision to station political agents inside Tibet divided the various branches of the British Foreign Service at all levels, involving bitter conflict between the Foreign Office in London, the viceroy and government of India, and the China Service in Peking. For Tibet, it represented an unwelcome end to decades of isolation and virtual independence and the beginning of a long struggle to protect the country from Britain and China.

Using official government sources, private papers and the diaries and memoirs of those involved, this book examines the impact of Younghusband's invasion and its aftermath inside Tibet and in the context of Britain's wider Asian policy against a background of dramatic international change.

Dr Wendy Palace is a founder member of the Tibet Society at Cambridge University. She has worked as a Lecturer in History at Durham University and as an associate Lecturer in History for the Open University.

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For Len and Steve

Contents



The Thirteenth Dalai Lama.

Figures

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1 The Younghusband invasion, 1900–1904

The secret waits for the insight
of eyes unclouded by longing;
Those who are bounded by desire
see only the outward container.
from *The Tao Te Ching* by Lao Tzu

In 1900 Tibet was a 'waiting secret', an undefined region of exotic reputation and stark physical and climatic contrasts about which the British knew very little. In 1904 (the year that the Younghusband expedition finally entered the forbidden city of Lhasa), leading experts like Eric Teichman of the China Consular Service divided the country into three distinct zones, all subject to varying degrees of political control by the Dalai Lama's government in Lhasa and the Manchu government in Peking.

The first zone, where the Dalai Lama's spiritual and temporal power was uncontested and which Teichman called the kingdom of Tibet, extended north as far as Kokonor and east as far as the ancient Burmese frontier with China. Included in this zone were the states of Chamdo, Draya, and Nyarong, which had only recently reverted to direct Tibetan control after years of Chinese occupation. At Lhasa, the capital, the Manchu had installed a representative, or *amban*.

The second zone, known to the China Service as East Tibet and to the Tibetans themselves as Kham, included the states of Chala, Batang and Litang, which bordered China and which the Manchu claimed as part of their extensive empire. Within this zone lay the wealthy state of Derge which, like Chamdo, Draya and Nyarong, had also recently reverted to the political control of Lhasa.[1] The nature of Chinese political control in East Tibet was purely nominal since the Manchu took only a limited interest in what they regarded as the outer reaches of their Empire. The area had long ago been left to the provincial governments of Sichuan to administer and their interest in the region waxed and waned according to the whims of their successive viceroys. Except in Derge, the Dalai Lama could expect to exercise little political control in East Tibet and even here his spiritual

supremacy was partly challenged by the abbots of its many powerful monasteries who, for the most part members of the ancient Red Hat sect, naturally resisted any interference from the newer reformist Gelug-pa or Yellow Hat sect to which the Dalai Lama belonged. This did not affect his ability to move freely in the region, however, since the Dalai Lama was much loved and venerated by the local people and was also useful to the Red Hat abbots who were able to exploit their connections with Lhasa as a means of reinforcing their own public credibility.[2] Apart from a few major cities and towns, and the network of trade routes crossing it, this area was largely uninhabited and often real power was concentrated in the hands of local chieftains and brigands who both terrorised and protected the local population.

The third zone, referred to by Teichman as Kokonor, was a vast, mainly desert region peopled by nomadic tribes of mixed Mongolian and Tibetan blood. Like East Tibet it was effectively controlled by various native chieftains, but here the Manchu had a second *amban*, based at Sining, near the great Tibetan monastery of Kumbum, an important religious centre and place of pilgrimage.

Although the Chinese *ambans* at Lhasa and at Sining were the official representatives of the Manchu court, by 1900 their ability to function efficiently was dangerously undermined by the collapsing Manchu dynasty and the Boxer Protocol of 1901 which had divided China up amongst the western powers and Japan. The kingdom of Tibet was known to be a theocracy with a dual system of government composed, in equal parts, of ecclesiastical and secular officials who met together in a National Assembly or Tsongdu summoned periodically by the Dalai Lama himself. Beyond this little was known or understood about the workings of the Tibetan system since few westerners had ever visited Lhasa in circumstances where they had had time or opportunity to study its customs.

By 1900 British curiosity about Tibet had developed for a number of reasons. Firstly, at a time when Great Game rivalry between Britain and Russia in Central Asia had resulted in rapid forward movements towards Tibet by both countries, Tibet's status and the precise nature of her relationship with neighbouring Himalayan states, as well as with Russia, presented a problem to the British, who suspected collusion between the Dalai Lama and the Russian Tsar. This situation seemed especially significant after 1900 when rumours began to circulate about a secret treaty between Tibet and Russia under which the Russians had allegedly promised to provide military support to the Dalai Lama in the event of foreign invasion. In the climate of the time it was impossible for Britain not to view this as an attempt at annexation by their Russian rivals.[3] Although Russian ministers had given firm assurances that no such treaty existed, the Tibetans began to behave as though they had Russian support and, by 1902, their confidence had grown to such an extent that they were openly flouting the 1893 Trade Agreement, conducted on their behalf,

but without their knowledge, by Chinese and British representatives for the purpose of regulating trade on the volatile Indo-Tibetan frontier. In 1902 (and probably in ignorance of these arrangements), Tibetan traders had broken the Agreement by entering land in British-held Sikkim, sparking a crisis which the British viceroy, Lord Curzon, then deliberately chose to exploit. The official British line on this occasion was that the 1893 Trade Agreement was legally binding because Tibet was under Chinese suzerainty, a fact that had been previously confirmed to British satisfaction by the Chefoo Treaty of 1876 upon which most of their calculations about Tibet were based.[4] When the Chinese proved unable to control Tibetan incursions into Sikkim however, alarm bells rang in London and led to the beginnings of a re-evaluation of Tibet's status *vis-à-vis* China and the start of what some began to refer to as the 'Tibetan problem'.

Few people in Britain at the start of the twentieth century were aware of Tibet's great imperial past when, for over two centuries, her fierce armies had carved out a vast empire in Central Asia. When this crumbled around 832 BC Tibet had become a unified, predominantly Buddhist state, engaged in active diplomatic dialogue with the neighbouring Himalayan states of Nepal, Bhutan and Sikkim, as well as with Mongolia, China and Russia. When Kublai Khan established a foothold in Tibet in the second half of the thirteenth century, Buddhism became the main religion in his eastern Mongolian empire, creating the strong political and religious bonds between the leaders of Mongolia and Tibet which still existed in 1900 but about which the British were largely unaware.[5] This strong Buddhist alliance had spread across Central Asia, making it possible for Russian Buriat monks like Aghvan Dorjiev to make contact with the Dalai Lama and even become an important member of his household during the 1890s, a relationship quite incomprehensible to the British, who considered Dorjiev's nationality of much greater significance than his religion.[6] This shared religion also made it much easier for Japanese Buddhists like Kawaguchi Ekai and Nomi Kan to travel inside Tibet and, after Japan signed a formal Alliance with Britain in 1902, they were able to provide useful information to their allies in London. Apart from a few Japanese sources, and the information acquired at great personal risk by Indian pundits travelling in disguise in Tibet between 1865 and 1888, there was little opportunity for the British to discover much about the country, let alone determine its status.[7]

If few people in Britain appreciated the complex nature of political relations in Central Asia, even fewer knew of or understood the *chö-yön* which was a fundamental part of Tibet's relations with China, confirmed when the Fifth Dalai Lama had been invited to visit Peking in 1653, soon after the Manchu dynasty came to power. This symbolic relationship was similar to that which existed between the rulers of Mongolia and Tibet and bound Tibetan Dalai Lamas and Manchu emperors together in a pact of mutual support. Under the *cho-yon* the Manchu emperors agreed to

defend Tibet in the event of foreign invasion in return for the Dalai Lama's personal spiritual protection.[8] Since British policy-makers were ignorant of this arrangement it was difficult for them to appreciate why the Manchu administration continued to operate inside Tibet at a time when their control was visibly weakening, leading them to the inevitable conclusion that the Chinese could no longer be trusted to protect Tibet from Russian intrusions. British perceptions about Tibet were therefore based upon a number of errors and misconceptions about the nature of Tibetan politics and culture which clouded their judgement and would have grave and widespread consequences for the Tibetans as time went on and as the Chinese increasingly misrepresented and exaggerated the nature of their claim to the country.

Britain's own involvement in Tibet had begun around 1774 when Warren Hastings of the British East India Company had sent a commercial mission under the leadership of George Bogle to the Sixth Panchen Lama at Shigatse, the second most important political and spiritual centre in Tibet. Bogle's lack of knowledge about the relationship between Tibetan religious leaders, together with the wealth and sophistication that greeted him at the Panchen Lama's palace at Tashilunpho, led to genuine confusion about the Lama's role and function within the Tibetan hierarchy, and, over time, it became convenient for the British to promote the more compliant Panchen Lama and his successors as the true rulers of Tibet with whom India might successfully trade, a process facilitated by the inability of many Dalai Lamas to survive to reach their majority.[9] In reality religious links between the Panchen Lama at Shigatse and the Dalai Lama at Lhasa were strong yet subtle, the former acting as a spiritual mentor to the Dalai Lama, while the latter was the acknowledged religious and secular ruler of Tibet. This delicate balance of power and the complex interplay between Church and State, regarded as medieval and quite alien to British thinking, created huge problems for them when genuine attempts began to be made to make formal contact with the Dalai Lama in 1900.

British interest in Tibet was further stimulated at this time by the relationship that developed between two men who never met and whose arrival on the political scene during the 1890s provided an impetus for dramatic change. Thubten Gyatso, who became Tibet's Thirteenth Dalai Lama in 1894, was the first to attain his majority and to rule the country effectively since the seventeenth century. George Nathaniel Curzon, a member of the British aristocracy and, at forty, the youngest ever viceroy of India, came to his post in 1899 already an acknowledged expert on Central Asian Affairs.[10] It was the lack of dialogue between these two powerful men that transformed Anglo-Tibetan relations. This was partly the result of Curzon's personal paranoia about Russian intentions towards Tibet, and partly the result of conditions within the Tibetan state itself.

By 1900 the relationship between the Ninth Panchen Lama and the

Thirteenth Dalai Lama was already strained, and true co-operation between them was prevented by their very different temperaments and by their relative closeness in age. The Ninth Panchen Lama was slightly younger than the Dalai Lama and far less worldly, a fact forcefully brought home to the Lhasa government in 1902 when, according to custom, he travelled to the capital to receive the Dalai Lama's blessing. Their failure to bond on this occasion deepened the growing rift between Lhasa and Shigatse, the Panchen Lama having recently enjoyed greater independence from Lhasa than would otherwise have been the case had the Thirteenth Dalai Lama's predecessors lived to obtain their majority. Thubten Gyatso's arrival had also exacerbated tensions inside Lhasa itself, giving greater hope to those who wished to free their country from Chinese influence, while upsetting those who welcomed what they regarded as Chinese protection.[11]

Although well travelled in Central Asia, like most of his contemporaries, Curzon was quite unacquainted with the internal workings of the Tibetan state. However, this did not prevent him having his own plans for Tibet whose mineral wealth and access route to south-west China he considered a vital source of potential revenue for the rapidly depleting Indian coffers. In more obvious power-political terms he also saw the possibility of establishing Tibet as a buffer state between India and Russia, both as a means of thwarting Russian aspirations and as a real solution to the costly Great Game rivalry which continued to dominate British policy in Central Asia. In this context therefore, and as the direct representative of Queen Victoria, the Empress of India, he saw no reason why he should not deal directly with the Tibetan ruler as one head of state to another, and without recourse to the Chinese who, in his opinion, had already proved themselves to be unworthy as intermediaries.

Curzon's idea was to approach the Dalai Lama by means of a peaceful mission to Lhasa which he hoped might iron out any past misunderstandings between Britain and Tibet and lift the ban on foreign travellers which they had imposed. He hoped that such a mission might also discover once and for all whether rumours that the Russians had agents in Lhasa were true and, if so, whether this meant that they really had political designs on Tibet which could threaten existing British interests in the Himalayas. His mistake was to assume that the Dalai Lama would accept the British viceroy as an equal or that the Tibetans would want to become politically involved with Britain.

The immediate circumstances leading to the despatch of the Younghusband expedition have been well explored, but, briefly, the facts are these. In August 1900 Curzon sent a personal letter to the Dalai Lama which was returned unopened six months later. In June 1901, employing the services of the Bhutanese spy, Ugyen Kazi, he sent a second letter which was also returned unopened, this time on the grounds that the messenger had been unable to find an official of suitable rank and reliability to carry it on

to Lhasa. It was impossible to tell whether Ugyen Kazi was telling the truth or had simply lost his nerve, but with the Russians advancing relentlessly further into Central Asia, and in the knowledge that the Chinese could do nothing to influence the Tibetans, Curzon decided that the only way forward was to despatch a mission to the Dalai Lama as soon as possible, with or without Tibetan permission, and in the hope that such a move would not be interpreted as a hostile act either in London or in Lhasa.

It was against this background that the Younghusband expedition set out to cross the border into Tibet in June 1903 to negotiate with the Tibetans at Khamba Jong, a fort just inside the Tibetan border with Sikkim. The mission was led by Colonel Francis Younghusband, at forty a veteran of the Chitral expedition on India's turbulent north-west frontier, and a man personally known to Curzon.[12] His team had been handpicked for their devotion to Curzonian forward policy and for their willingness to face whatever dangers they might meet once inside Tibet. From the start this was more than the mere commercial venture it purported to be. Mission members, each with a military or Civil Service background, had an additional role to play in collecting and collating information, and scientific experts were called in to examine the geology, fauna, and flora that was discovered as the expedition moved further into the Tibetan hinterland.[13] It was soon clear to those Tibetans monitoring the situation from Shigatse, that the mission was interested in doing more than it claimed. What was even more sinister to them was the size of the accompanying military escort, soon to be the main bone of contention between the British and Tibetans in the coming months as Younghusband moved ever closer to Lhasa, his ultimate goal.

As well as impacting on Britain's relations with Tibet, China and Russia, the Younghusband expedition acted as a catalyst for changes inside the various branches of the British Foreign Service involved with Asia, provoking alarm in London and exposing the tensions surrounding anything that might be labelled 'imperial' activity that were surfacing at the turn of the century. Inside the British Parliament the Liberal Opposition, left-wing Radicals, and Irish Nationalists made great play of the fact that the mission was obviously a military one because of the size of its military escort. They also argued that the escort itself had contravened the Government of India Act of 1858 forbidding all ventures of an aggressive military nature on India's borders. For many the need to end such expensive entanglements in Central Asia and seek *rapprochement* with Russia was being dangerously compromised by the expedition which, as it moved further into Tibet, also began to antagonise the Russians.[14] The situation was further complicated by extensive press coverage of events, particularly from *The Times* and the *Daily Mail*, who had each sent their own correspondents to cover the story and who regularly returned detailed and often colourful accounts of what was happening to whet the appetites of their growing readership.[15] When the exasperated Tibetans eventually

attacked Younghusband at Guru in March 1904, wider international public opinion turned against the British completely as photographs of ill-equipped Tibetan dead and wounded littered the front pages of the world's press. On top of recent castigation over their conduct in the Boer War, this was an humiliation which the British could not afford to tolerate if they wanted to retain their premier international status in a modern world increasingly critical of this type of imperialistic aggression.[16]

Inside Balfour's Unionist Cabinet in London there were already grave misgivings. Having very reluctantly allowed Younghusband to set out in the first place, they had then been forced to agree to his requests for an advance from Khamba Jong to Gyantse, the nearest large town before Lhasa itself, in order not to appear to withdraw and so endanger British lives. However, they had tried to forestall any possible attempt by Curzon to annex Tibet by issuing a telegram on 6 November 1903 in which British policy was clearly stated. The 'November telegram' forbade any permanent occupation of Tibet or any attempt to install a British representative at Lhasa, but it had already been superseded by events at Guru, and later at Gyanste in the following June, where the expedition had once again been attacked by Tibetan troops.[17] It now became imperative to save face and support Younghusband's move on to Lhasa as the only way to protect the British party and, at this point, Liberal Opposition Members could only provide token resistance, mainly by abstaining from voting in the key parliamentary debates on the issue. Having stifled all but the most radical elements in the British Parliament, Younghusband was able to press ahead and, with the full weight of the British government behind them, he and his party eventually entered the forbidden city of Lhasa on 3 August 1904.

Signed on 7 September 1904, the Lhasa Convention posed as a commercial document but, because the Indian government were anxious to increase their political influence in Tibet as much as possible in order to counter any future Russian interference there, it also had great political significance. Despite the November telegram prohibiting any long-term involvement in Tibet, Curzon pushed ahead with his plan to get a British representative permanently stationed in Lhasa as part of the treaty settlement and, when this tactic continued to be vehemently opposed in London, he told Younghusband to concentrate on establishing trade marts inside Tibet from which to co-ordinate commercial activities and monitor any future political developments. Two such marts were set up under the terms of the Convention: one at Gartok in western Tibet, and one as close to Lhasa as possible, at Gyanste. These were in addition to an existing mart at Yatung at the entrance to the Chumbi valley, which had been opened under the Anglo-Chinese Trade Agreement of 1893.[18]

In order to secure exclusive British interests in Tibet, Article 1X of the Convention prevented representatives of other powers enjoying any commercial or political dealings with the country. The original intention behind this article had been to exclude Russia, but its main effect was to

upset the Chinese who naturally viewed it as a direct challenge to their claimed suzerain rights in Tibet. This eventually resulted in their refusal to acknowledge the Convention, involving the British government in a protracted battle to secure an adhesion treaty which would not be signed until almost two years later.

The controversial indemnity clause, personally negotiated by Younghusband himself, imposed a huge fine on the Tibetan people and allowed for the temporary occupation of the Chumbi valley by British troops until it was paid. When news of this reached London it resulted in an explosion of hostility towards Younghusband and was followed by a full-scale inquiry into his behaviour at Lhasa, which he and fellow expedition members deeply resented and which almost certainly damaged his later career. The indemnity itself was clearly excessive and reflected a personal animosity towards the Tibetans whom Younghusband blamed entirely, and quite unfairly, for the loss of British lives en route to Lhasa as their troops fought to defend their country from what they believed to be an invading army.[19] Negotiations over payment of the indemnity would also complicate Anglo-Chinese relations when Peking's offer to pay off the money on Tibet's behalf was interpreted in India as a deliberate attempt by the Chinese to undermine what they considered to be their achievements at Lhasa by removing British troops from their temporary occupation of the Chumbi valley before they were ready to leave.[20]

There was also considerable controversy in London and Peking over the status of the delegates who had signed the Lhasa Convention. The following names appeared as signatories: Colonel Francis Younghusband (British commissioner), the Ti Rimpoche (representative of the Dalai Lama and chief abbot of Ganden monastery), representatives of the three great Lhasa monasteries of Ganden, Sera and Drepung, and members of the Tsongdu. The Dalai Lama himself had not signed, having left Lhasa before Younghusband had arrived to avoid being compromised or exploited by the British in any way. The Chinese *amban*, Yu Tai, had acquiesced in the proceedings but had not signed. The ceremony had taken place inside the Potala itself and had all the appearance of formality, with the Ti Rimpoche signing as the Dalai Lama's official representative – but in many other respects this was not the legally binding document that Younghusband clearly believed it to be. After the formal signing ceremony, which lasted for a full one and a half hours, he addressed the Tibetan people, stressing his desire for friendship between Britain and Tibet, a hope previously encouraged by the co-operative attitude adopted towards the British by those Tibetans not under the direct authority of Lhasa. After this he and the other expedition members holidayed in the city, visiting temples and other places of interest, gathering information, and enjoying the natural hospitality of the Tibetan people.[21]

Despite all the appearance of legality, however, the Convention was quite unorthodox and the status of the signatories highly questionable.

Although Younghusband had been granted permission to negotiate a bilateral treaty with Tibet, he was very unclear about how much flexibility he had been given. The additional complication of the approaching winter (which would block the passes and make a speedy return to India impossible), coupled with pressure from Brigadier-General James Macdonald, the military head of the expedition (whom Younghusband constantly suspected of trying to wrest control from him and whom some expedition members had already nicknamed 'retiring Mac'), meant that any decisions taken had to be taken quickly. The extent to which Younghusband therefore acted in ignorance of instructions from India remains a matter for continuing speculation, but it is a fact that, despite all the trappings of officialdom, his position was quite precarious and certainly no longer as secure as it had formerly been when the expedition first set out. In addition, Lord Curzon himself was under investigation following a prolonged and bitter battle with Lord Kitchener, military adviser to his council, and had left India on extended leave in April 1904 before finally resigning as viceroy in the middle of his second term in November 1905. Without his main support Younghusband was left entirely exposed, as acting viceroy Lord Ampthill, though obviously sympathetic, kept a discreet distance from the situation, having no wish to become embroiled in what was fast becoming an embarrassing and potentially volatile situation.[22]

As Tibetan representative, the Ti Rimpoche's position was also an extremely delicate one. The Dalai Lama had fled Lhasa before Younghusband's arrival, leaving him with the official seal which empowered him to negotiate with the British but which also made him entirely responsible for the outcome. Although still able to maintain limited contact with the Dalai Lama, communication in such mountainous terrain was not always reliable and the elderly monk had been very reluctant to accept his role as chief negotiator. In essence, therefore, the Ti Rimpoche was in the same abandoned position as Younghusband, but his situation was made infinitely worse by the machinations of the various monastic factions inside Lhasa who opposed the Dalai Lama's policies and who took the opportunity afforded by his enforced absence to discredit his representative and disown the Convention, as soon as the British finally left the city on the morning of 23 September 1904.[23]

The Chinese *amban* Yu Tai fared even less well. Three years later he was removed from his post, arrested, and sent home in chains, after being accused by Peking of collaboration with the British during this period, even though he had virtually no influence with the Lhasa authorities and there was clearly very little he might have done to prevent the British entry into Lhasa.[24]

In terms of achieving what it had set out to do – namely, establishing a treaty with the Tibetans which would keep foreign powers out of Tibet – the Lhasa Convention had failed. The Tibetans rejected it and the Peking

government questioned its legality. The British government were embarrassed by it and the indemnity clause in Article 1X drew further damaging international criticism.[25] The disappearance of the Dalai Lama provided an additional complication, and, far from settling the frontier as intended, the Convention left it even more disturbed. Chinese protests over the treaty also drew British attention to the issue of Chinese suzerainty over Tibet, a factor not previously openly addressed in their Tibetan policy. All these negative reactions to the Lhasa Convention helped to polarise the two factions within British politics, already divided between those promoting and those opposing Curzon's forward policy in Central Asia.

In Curzon's absence the government of India resumed its earlier policy of forbearance, but from within its ranks a powerful Curzonian lobby fought on with a well-orchestrated campaign in London and India which kept the option of a continuing forward policy very much alive. This support was revealed, firstly, in an entrenched hostility towards the Dalai Lama and the promotion of the Panchen Lama as an acceptable alternative ruler. Secondly, in the attempt to keep the Chumbi valley in British hands for as long as possible, and thirdly in sustained agitation for frontier exploration – all of which became more pronounced as time went on.

The Younghusband expedition, and the Lhasa Convention that followed, had important long-term consequences for the British Foreign Service. By placing Tibet momentarily in the international spotlight, it forced Britain to define her Tibetan policy in a way not previously considered either necessary or desirable. Photographs of Tibetan wounded, and daily press coverage of the progress of the expedition by Candler of the *Daily Mail* and Landon of *The Times*, ensured that events in Tibet captured the public imagination at a time when mass public opinion was beginning to have a real influence on the policies of political parties. Younghusband himself would later cite the influence of public opinion as a major factor in promoting the criticism he subsequently received when he returned to London in 1904.[26]

The Lhasa Convention itself had also left a number of loose ends, not the least of which was the temporary British occupation of the Chumbi valley, which Curzon hoped to make permanent, and the presence of British trade agents inside Tibet at marts in Gyantse, Yatung and Gartok whose continuing safety now had to be ensured. This in turn had a detrimental effect on relations between London and India, deepening the split between Curzon's supporters and opponents, but also, at a more fundamental level, exploiting existing divisions between the viceroy in India and the secretary of state for India, operating thousands of miles away at the India Office in London. In Calcutta, Tibet was seen as part of a wider evolving Himalayan strategy which aimed to establish loose political control over the states of Bhutan, Nepal and Sikkim, whose borders touched those of India. Curzon had made Tibet part of this longer-term strategy, but, because British interests in the country had been ongoing

after Bogle had returned to India with gold dust in the eighteenth century, the Younghusband expedition had also had the support of powerful business interests in London and India who were anxious to exploit Tibet's vast commercial potential for themselves.[27] After Younghusband the conflict between supporters of Curzonian forward policy and successive governments in London with little or no interest in becoming involved in such a remote part of the world, intensified to become part of the much-wider debate over who should control Indian frontier policy; this would complicate relations between London and India for the next two decades.

By far the most important effect of the British invasion of Tibet for Britain in diplomatic terms was the implications it had for her relations with China. Until Younghusband entered Lhasa in 1904 the Foreign Office had tended to place Tibet in the wider context of Anglo-Chinese relations. The effect of the Younghusband expedition was to generate panic in London and initiate a period of rivalry between the China Service (responsible for the conduct of policy inside China) and the India Service (responsible for the administration of India and the protection of her borders). This rivalry would continue and increase after 1904, to the detriment of future negotiations involving Tibet between London, India and Peking.

In one sense this rivalry was purely commercial for, like the Curzonians in the India Service, some members of the China Service were equally interested in the possibility of developing the commercial potential of south-western China and, at times, China consuls had become directly involved in British business ventures. The main thrust of British policy, however, was concentrated upon the development of her commercial interests in the Yangtse basin, and successive British ministers to Peking tended to regard the exploration of resources on the remote Sino-Tibetan and Sino-Burmese borders as both a waste of manpower and resources.

The greatest problem which the Younghusband expedition would create for the China Service itself, however, had more to do with the disruption of its harmonious relations with the Chinese government in Peking, already severely tested by the Boxer Rebellion of 1900 and the humiliating treaty that had followed.[28] The British minister to China, Ernest Satow, and John Jordan, his successor after 1906, suffered the consequences of this and struggled to restore equitable relations with Peking in the wake of what the Chinese took to be a British invasion of their territory. Both men also became exasperated by the situation, which they saw as an unnecessary artificial problem created by an over-ambitious Indian government acting without giving thought to the best interests of Britain's wider Asian policy, and Jordan would later describe Tibet as a 'running sore' in Anglo-Chinese relations.[29]

The British Foreign Office in London, who had done their utmost to prevent Younghusband from setting out, now found themselves at loggerheads with India over Tibet, with the India Office caught between the two

as the effective organ of liaison between the viceroy in India and central government in London. After Younghusband, the official attitude towards India began to change as London sought to challenge viceregal power, and Curzon's successors found it difficult to behave with the same degree of confidence which he had exhibited.

Premen Addy has famously portrayed Tibet as a pawn on an imperial chessboard and as a helpless victim of the Great Game played out between the major powers in Central Asia.[30] In many respects this interpretation is accurate. However, though a victim of imperial policy, Tibet was able to exact her own revenge for Britain's failure to comprehend her existing status and importance in Central Asia, and involvement in Tibet would eventually become a real threat to British prestige for a number of reasons. The inhospitable climate and terrain made the country quite inaccessible for much of the year, except to the most hardened and determined invasion force. Areas of Tibet, for many years regarded by the Chinese as part of their empire, were never controlled by them in any meaningful sense. In fact, many of the minor officials and troops sent there to be stranded without support in the isolated garrisons and posts along the tortuous road to Lhasa often only survived by going native, sometimes even taking Tibetan women as common-law wives and adopting Tibetan dress and customs.

Christian missionary work in East Tibet was also seriously hampered by the strength of the Buddhist religion and opposition from the powerful monasteries. Eventually, even the most dedicated missionaries had to admit defeat after finding it virtually impossible to make lasting converts amongst the Tibetans, with the result that one possible avenue of contact between West and East, so successfully exploited in other parts of the British Empire, was effectively closed off.[31]

Invasion from India was impossible for most of the year since the few passes into Tibet were blocked by snow, and, even when it was possible to use them, altitude sickness and exposure took their toll on those unused to the mountain environment, as the members of the Younghusband expedition had discovered to their cost.[32] Although the difficulty of travelling in Tibet was, ironically, one of the greatest attractions for foreigners, few fully appreciated the extreme physical hardships they would experience, or the nature of the opposition from Tibetan officials they would face, if they did succeed in crossing its mountainous border. Once inside the country the Tibetans had evolved many subtle strategies for dealing with outsiders, and, as the Lhasa Convention showed, getting the Tibetans to sign a formal treaty did not in any way guarantee its implementation.

Involvement in Tibet also highlighted a number of factors which, in the long term, would threaten the very survival of British imperialism in Asia. Firstly, there was the problem of maintaining prestige in remote areas like Tibet, where credibility was vitally important and where any loss of face

might endanger the lives of British agents working there. Secondly, areas like Tibet exacerbated conflicts already developing between bureaucracies in London and the men on the spot, as imperial committees and the paperwork they generated blossomed, and as the need for Foreign Office 'experts' was deemed an essential part of modern government in the early twentieth century. The process of governmental expansion and the level of bureaucratic interference were also further aided by the introduction of much speedier communications between London, India and China. By 1904, for example, it was possible for a telegraph message to reach Calcutta or Peking within a day, a great trial to those men on the spot who, like Younghusband, found themselves in the same dangerous and compromising situations but without the ability to use their initiative for fear of having to risk their careers and account for mistakes for which, in the past, greater allowance would almost certainly have been made. This also had the additional effect of undermining confidence without providing essential backup, for although messages from London might reach Calcutta or Peking within hours, passing them on to remote posts on the north-east frontier could take many days. The gradual erosion of trust between colleagues on the spot and in London, already aggravated by tensions between and within the various branches of the British Foreign Service, in turn had a wider and increasingly negative impact upon the administration of British imperial policy worldwide and was a key factor in the decline of interest in imperialist expansion inside the British Foreign Office.

A third quite separate and more immediate problem was created by the Younghusband expedition itself when it became clear that the boundaries of Tibet would need to be defined in order to avoid any future incidents like that which had led to its despatch in 1903. The British need to define Tibet in western terms also provoked debates between Britain and China about the principle of landownership. The Chinese knew, for example, that what appeared to the British to be an uninhabited wilderness had often been previously divided up by treaty understandings between Tibet and her neighbours, and they became adept at giving out misinformation which confused and baffled the policy-makers in London. As soon as British agents began working inside Tibet after 1904 they quickly discovered that the trade marts they were supposed to be monitoring under the terms of the Lhasa Convention were in fact part of a complex ancient network of well-used trade routes, often collectively owned by the nomads and herders who moved their animals from one trade mart to another, and by Tibetan officials granted monopolies for certain kinds of trade by the Lhasa authorities. The British presence, and more particularly their attempts to introduce Indian traders artificially and set up new boundary markers, frequently generated understandable anger and resentment amongst local Tibetan monopoly holders towards strangers who did not understand the nature of the Tibetan economy or even share their ideas

about landownership. British arrogance, and their hasty assumptions about the way in which Tibetans related to neighbouring tribes and countries, was also a continual source of tension which the more unscrupulous amongst the Tibetan community found they could easily exploit, often involving British agents on the spot in endless conflicts with local Tibetan and Chinese officials working at the marts.

The nature of the problem generated by the Younghusband expedition was therefore large and fundamental in opening up divisions within British ranks and challenging the strength of British imperialism at a time when their resources were becoming increasingly overstretched. On the one hand, Younghusband's arrival in Lhasa had removed much of the hysteria surrounding the apparent Russian threat to the frontier that had been the major excuse for its despatch, whilst on the other it had created a completely fresh set of problems, not the least of which was to be the resurrection of China's own interest in Tibet. Furthermore, as a direct result of the Younghusband expedition the British had been exposed to vitriolic press criticism, which subsequently forced them to justify imperialist expansion elsewhere which they would have preferred to keep quiet. For the Tibetans the Younghusband invasion would mark the beginnings of a quite different process which would eventually lead to the full-scale Chinese invasion of Lhasa in 1910. It also led to the Tibetan declaration of independence in 1912, ironically a move acknowledged by Britain, most of Europe, and by America as a sign that Tibet could function in the modern world as an independent sovereign country with the Dalai Lama as her head of state.

2 Masterly inactivity

Britain's non-involvement policy, 1905–1908

> Minto shrewdly assessed the temperament of the Secretary of State and set himself to counteract its dangers. His aim was, by patient argument and adroit suggestion to get Mr Morley to believe that the policy of the Government of India was initiated by Whitehall.
>
> John Buchan, of Lord Minto, in *Lord Minto: A Memoir*

In December 1905 Anglo-Tibetan relations entered a new phase when a Liberal government came to power with a new approach to India's north-east frontier.

While in Opposition during 1903 and 1904 the Liberal party had joined with Radicals and Irish nationalists in vociferously condemning the Younghusband mission as aggressive imperialist expansion, although the Liberal front bench had resisted the temptation to vote against the Unionist government when it became clear that, having come so far, Younghusband could not retreat from Tibet without incurring a loss of face or even loss of lives. Once in power, however, the Liberals were determined to withdraw from all entanglements in Tibet, which they believed would almost certainly jeopardise their chances of achieving a permanent settlement with Russia and so put a stop to the Great Game which was proving so costly to Britain, both in financial and political terms.

Meanwhile, at the Far Eastern Department of the Foreign Office in London, concerns about Chinese activity in East Tibet began to create a climate of anxiety about the possibly detrimental effect British involvement in Tibet might have upon Anglo-Chinese relations, and the situation was being closely monitored from Peking by British minister Ernest Satow and his consular officers stationed at Chengdu in Chinese Sichuan, close to the East Tibetan border.

The Younghusband venture, and the persistence of Curzonian forward policy after he left Lhasa in September 1904, had long-term consequences for the British as well as for the Tibetans and soon began to affect both countries in different ways. For the Tibetans this meant having to adjust to the presence of British agents and troops on their soil; for the British one

of its more immediate effects was to expose a serious weakness in the formulation of Indian frontier policy made manifest in the clash of wills that developed after 1905 between the newly appointed viceroy of India, Gilbert Minto, and John Morley, the new secretary of state for India. Both men had very definite views on how India should be governed, Morley's strong support for Liberal non-involvement being at odds with Minto's keen interest in military matters.[1]

In sanctioning the Younghusband expedition Balfour's Unionist government had contravened the 1858 Government of India Act forbidding military activity on India's frontiers. Although the despatch of the expedition had raised Opposition hackles in London in 1903, it had not been particularly significant in Indian terms since as viceroy, Curzon himself had initiated the venture. By 1905, however, times had changed and the new Liberal administration in London were now prepared to implement a non-involvement policy on the Indian frontier without the approval of their new viceroy if necessary. The conduct of frontier policy had been the traditional preserve of British viceroys for very practical reasons. Situations on India's north-east and north-west frontiers could develop very rapidly and demanded an immediate response if a crisis was to be averted. The recent loss of the British agent Pierre Cavaglari on the north-west frontier had brought this forcefully home to the British government, and fear of the same thing happening to the Younghusband party had been the main impetus behind their decision to support the expedition after the disastrous events at Guru in March 1904.[2]

The non-involvement policy, formulated after Curzon left India, was intended to prevent any further independent initiatives by his successors and constituted a direct challenge to Minto's ability to act without supervision in frontier matters. It was inevitable therefore that the policy would bring him into conflict with London by exacerbating existing tensions between secretary of state and viceroy already implicit in the Government of India Act of 1858 which had failed to define their respective roles adequately.[3] Minto and Morley were therefore at loggerheads from the start and both found it particularly difficult to co-operate in the disturbance created by the Younghusband expedition and its aftermath. Minto, for example, was keenly aware that he was directly responsible for the support and protection of British trade agents now installed at the three trade marts inside Tibet, and that the non-involvement policy being pressed on him from London permitted only token military backup at the marts. Matters were further complicated for him because, without exception, these agents were Curzonian in allegiance and, having been carefully selected for their skills as spies and not for their ability as traders, they soon made clear their intention to resist the non-involvement policy to the end.[4]

Minto's ability to influence and control frontier policy was tested soon after he became viceroy by two incidents. The first involved the Panchen

Lama's visit to India in 1905, the second being a dispute over the erection of boundary pillars on Tibet's frontier with British-held Sikkim.

During 1905 two prominent Curzonians, Frederick O'Connor, British trade agent at Gyantse, and Claude White, Britain's political officer in Sikkim, co-operated in a plan to invite the Panchen Lama to India to coincide with the official visit there of the Prince and Princess of Wales; the intention was to present him to the royal couple as the ruler of Tibet.[5] The persistence of the special bond between the Panchen Lama and key members of the Indian Civil Service, like O'Connor and White, together with the absence of the Dalai Lama, made it plausible for Curzonians to argue a case for the Panchen Lama, especially as he himself had accepted their invitation to India with apparent enthusiasm and had willingly left his palace at Shigatse, despite the misgivings of many of his followers and without seeking the Dalai Lama's permission in accordance with established custom. Although in reality fear of what the British might do if he refused their invitation had probably proved a stronger inducement to undertake the long journey to India than ambitions of power, as the Lhasa authorities would later claim, this was a serious breach of etiquette with unfortunate repercussions for his later relations with the Dalai Lama.[6]

Accompanied by Frederick O'Connor, by now regarded as a true friend and ally, the Panchen Lama arrived in Rawalpindi in November 1905 to a rapturous reception from the many Indian Buddhists living there. He then spent much time visiting Buddhist shrines and temples, this being given out as the official reason for his visit.[7] Whilst there, however, he crucially took part in a review of British and Indian troops, standing together as an equal with the rulers of the neighbouring Himalayan states of Bhutan and Nepal, and even receiving a seventeen-gun salute which made him higher in rank than the Tsonga Penlop of Bhutan who only received fifteen.[8]

During the course of his visit, and in accordance with the plot hatched by O'Connor and White, he was formally introduced to the Prince and Princess of Wales as Tibet's official representative and, on 10 January 1906, was invited to the kind of private audience with the viceroy normally reserved only for visiting heads of state. Part of the secret arrangement attached to this visit was then revealed when the Panchen Lama met Minto in Calcutta and made three requests to him. The first – an obvious and understandable attempt to shield himself from possible reprisals from either the Dalai Lama or the Manchu emperor, who had also not been informed about the trip – was to ask for a letter promising British assistance in the event of any hostile actions from Peking or Lhasa following his visit. The second was to ask Minto for arms to defend himself in the event of any attack, and the third – and for Minto the most significant – was to request that O'Connor and his fellow officers stationed at Gyantse might continue their friendly dialogue with Shigatse. The reply he received from the viceroy was clearly not what O'Connor and White had led him to expect, however, for in response to his first request Minto

politely informed him that, since the Indian government had already explained to the Chinese that the nature of his visit was private, it was highly unlikely that they would act against him but that, if they did, he could be reassured that 'the good offices of the British Government would doubtless be exerted on his behalf'. His plea for arms was then firmly denied, again on the weak excuse that an armed attack was improbable. Minto agreed to his third request, however, and it was this that brought the viceroy into conflict with the India Office.[9]

Although approved in principle in London, Minto's guarded replies were later modified in terms even less favourable to the Panchen Lama, and in February 1906 British officers at Gyantse were ordered to confine their communications with Shigatse to 'the narrowest possible limits', avoiding any action which the Chinese might interpret as interference in the internal affairs of Tibet. The February telegram was a very clear indication to Minto that London had no wish to become involved in any dealings with Tibetans which might impair their future relations with China.[10]

The Panchen Lama and his huge retinue left India in January 1906 in a sad and confused state, the journey back to Shigatse taking over a month and proving something of an adventure in itself as Chinese and Tibetan officials monitored its progress very closely. The visit would have wide political implications for Britain and Tibet. As well as convincing the Panchen Lama that his British allies were not as powerful as he had once thought them, thus making him vulnerable to Chinese influence later on, it caused great embarrassment to the British Foreign Office in London – not only because it drew official protests from both Peking and St Petersburg but also because it exacerbated the growing tension between the Panchen Lama and the Dalai Lama in such a way as to implicate Britain, the Panchen Lama having later defended his decision to go to India to the Lhasa authorities on the grounds that he had been coerced by employees of the Indian government.[11]

Although White and O'Connor accepted responsibility and were later officially reprimanded for organising the delivery of the invitation, which they referred to privately as 'our little plan', the visit had obviously been sanctioned at a much higher level some time beforehand. It is difficult not to see Curzon's guiding hand at the heart of the venture since he had personally issued the invitation to India, but had left before details of the visit could be finalised.[12] The whole debacle was Morley's first introduction to the 'Tibetan problem' and he was dismayed that the India Office had not been consulted before the invitation had been issued. The incident confirmed his growing belief that, in delicate frontier matters such as this, the viceroy could not always be trusted to take advice from London and that, even when willing to obey the Foreign Office, he could not be relied upon to control the behaviour of his men on the spot whose initiatives, as in this case, could easily be delivered as a *fait accompli*. Furthermore, Curzon's successor Minto was already proving more sympathetic to independent

initiatives from his frontier staff than had been expected, given his previous background and the awkwardness between himself and Curzon during the extended takeover period.[13]

Although less forthright in promoting a forward policy than his predecessor, Minto nevertheless greatly enjoyed the cut and thrust of frontier politics and was deeply concerned to protect British personnel inside Tibet, if necessary without regard to directives from London. It was this attitude that brought him once again into direct conflict with Morley, this time in an issue involving Claude White, in his capacity as political officer in Sikkim. One of the main reasons for the despatch of the Younghusband expedition had been to try to solve the problem of fixing a viable Tibetan boundary with Sikkim which the British had accused the Tibetans of violating under the terms of the earlier Sikkim–Tibet Convention of 1890.[14] In December 1904 White had complained to India about the continuing friction created by the absence of boundary pillars along the Tibeto-Sikkim frontier. In his letter to the viceroy he had suggested that pillars might be erected along the boundary above Giaogong, a town just inside British-held Sikkim. After expressing some initial concern that such a move might antagonise the Lhasa authorities, already disturbed by Younghusband's recent presence, the Indian government agreed to allow White to go ahead with the scheme, on the grounds that neither Lhasa nor the Tibetan herders of the Lachin valley, where the pillars were to be erected, had voiced any objection to them.[15] In the hope that there would be no complications, and in a spirit of friendly co-operation therefore, White then invited the Tibetans to send suitably qualified delegates to meet him at the erection site. However, it was now late in the year, and the Lhasa authorities naturally refused to supply delegates who would have great difficulty in reaching the site. It was then agreed that any meeting should be postponed until the following spring. Since there was no urgent need to erect the pillars with winter coming on, and with British attention primarily focused upon the settlement of the frontier, White was not unduly worried at this stage, hoping no doubt that the British would soon be in a strong position to solve any future problems.[16] Unfortunately for him this was not to be the case for the Lhasa Convention had created more problems than it had solved. In this new and confusing situation the relatively small matter of the boundary pillars was allowed to lapse until March 1906, when Minto was obliged to remind the Tibetans of their duty under the terms of the Lhasa Convention to clearly demarcate their border with Sikkim.[17]

Minto's support for the erection of boundary pillars was to lead him into a humiliating confrontation with Morley during the course of that year and was but a small taste of things to come as, between 1906 and 1908, the new viceroy struggled to retain the degree of control over Indian frontier policy exercised by his more powerful predecessor Lord Curzon.

In June 1906 Morley replied caustically to Minto's requests for boundary pillars by asking him to supply hard evidence that the practical problems created by their absence were sufficient to justify their erection. Morley also demanded details of White's communications with Lhasa on the subject. Responding in similar vein, Minto asked why the India Office did not choose to think it important that the Tibetans be encouraged to observe Article I of the Lhasa Convention requiring the erection of pillars, provoking a strongly worded reply from Morley containing a clear policy statement which, like the November telegram delivered to Younghusband, aimed to end discussion and establish the India Office in London as the premier authority in frontier matters. Morley argued that as no obvious inconvenience had been caused by the absence of boundary pillars, and providing the Tibetans did not violate Article I of the Lhasa Convention by crossing the border, there was no need to erect such markers which, in any case, would only serve to escalate tensions and could easily be ignored or even torn down. His telegram ended with an ominous warning to Minto that he should be aware that official policy towards Tibet was to 'avoid all necessary causes of controversy with the Lhasa Government'.[18] This was a clear attempt to put the viceroy in his place and was a hefty nail in the coffin of those seeking to promote viceregal authority above that of London in the affairs of India. After receiving this message Minto never again exposed himself in this way to open castigation, or attempts by London to usurp his right to control frontier policy, but he did continue to support frontier initiatives in a less obvious way by encouraging his agents to use their initiative, and by turning a blind eye to travellers wherever possible.

The two incidents of the Panchen Lama's visit and the erection of boundary pillars would set the tone of future discussions about Tibetan policy throughout the Minto/Morley tenure, creating a situation in which Curzonian forward policy was kept alive when it might so easily have collapsed in the face of such formidable opposition from London.

In order to implement the non-involvement policy and stabilise what was quickly threatening to escalate the Great Game rivalry of the previous century, the British Foreign Office, under the leadership of Liberal foreign secretary Sir Edward Grey, decided to settle their relations with Russia and China. In the case of China this would involve them in tortuous negotiations – firstly, to secure a Chinese adhesion to the Lhasa Convention; secondly, to organise the payment of the huge Tibetan indemnity which Younghusband had demanded; and thirdly, to tackle the problem of trade and boundary rights with the Chinese created by the botched trade regulation treaties of 1890 and 1893.

The Anglo-Russian Convention and Tibet

Grey had become foreign secretary in December 1905 and was determined to effect a successful *rapprochement* with Russia, the ultimate aim of

Liberal policy which had been severely tested by Younghusband's invasion of Tibet. In terms of Britain's wider foreign policy commitments, securing peaceful co-existence with Russia in Central Asia would also serve to balance their relations with Europe, a process already begun in 1904 when Britain had signed an entente cordiale with France, Russia's greatest ally. By joining with Russia and France the Liberals hoped to counter German military ambitions, rapidly overtaking Russophobia as the main source of paranoia in British ranks, as Europe began to prepare for the First World War.

With this in mind it was decided that the three principle areas of conflict with Russia in Central Asia – namely, Afghanistan, Persia and Tibet – could each be dealt with by separate treaty which could then be combined for ratification. Since it was felt by both sides that Tibet would be the easiest issue to settle first, talks about the country began in St Petersburg in early June 1906 between Russian minister, Alexander Petrovich Izvolsky, and British minister, Sir Arthur Nicolson. As the result of two minor diplomatic incidents between Britain and Russia talks made very slow progress throughout 1906, but by the beginning of 1907 Nicolson began to report a warming on the Russian side and on 31 August 1907 the separate treaty about Tibet was successfully concluded. During the course of the negotiations, however, a number of quite serious unforeseen issues concerning Tibet appeared.[19]

At first the main barrier to the talks had been the continuing British occupation of the Chumbi valley. When Nicolson refused to discuss the matter in depth, Izvolsky pressed for a redefinition of British policy, hinting darkly that if the British occupation there continued Russia might be 'entitled to concessions'.[20] Anglo-Russian wrangles over Chumbi were then further complicated by Russian awareness of strong Indian objections to the talks taking place inside Russia at all on the grounds that the Lhasa Convention had established Tibet as an Indian preserve and that the negotiations should therefore be held in Calcutta.[21] This unwise attempt by London to distance India from Tibet would have serious consequences for the British Foreign Service as time went on.

The lingering British presence in Chumbi was not the only barrier to successful negotiations. British attempts to introduce a clause banning scientific missions to Tibet created such friction that at one point they jeopardised the very survival of the talks.

Morley had already antagonised Minto by calling for a ban on all frontier travel, although he had managed to secure parliamentary sanction for the principle of a ban on travel being applied to the Russians as well as to employees of the Indian government.[22] In July 1906 the Russians had suggested that they might agree to a ban of no longer than five years. This was because powerful factions within the Imperial Geographical Society inside Russia were promoting frontier exploration, partly as a convenient cover for spying. In doing so, they enjoyed the active support of the Tsar

himself and Izvolsky's ability to override these interests was inhibited by his fear that his own position inside Russia would be endangered, a fact which Nicolson came to appreciate more fully as time went on.[23] Although the British minister went to great lengths to try to convince his colleague that the reason for the ban was not to thwart Russian scientists, nor to accuse the Russian government of intrigue, but was merely intended as a means of ruling out the possibility of upsetting the sensitive Lhasa authorities any more than was necessary, Izvolsky could not be convinced and would only suggest as a compromise that the ban might not be 'formally stated' in the final treaty draft.[24] In order to move talks forward, and after all attempts to get the Chinese to impose a blanket ban on all foreign travel to Tibet had failed, Grey was persuaded to adopt the alternative option of a three-year ban, to be reviewed after the relevant time period had elapsed.[25] As Grey would later observe, attempts to ban travel any longer would have run into even greater difficulties since it was quite impossible to determine whether Russian scientists, explorers or pilgrim monks were spying, British experience with the Russian Buriat Aghvan Dorjiev having been a very sore case in point.[26] Meanwhile, the ban on Indian travel was a continuous source of aggravation to Minto and a ban equally impossible to enforce, even with a will, as became obvious later on when his attempts to prevent Sven Hedin, the famous Swedish explorer, entering Tibet proved futile.[27]

Allied to the dispute over the travel ban was the conflict that developed over the routes used by Russian traders and monks visiting Lhasa. The problem of delimiting Tibetan borders had first been raised by Izvolsky when talks began in June 1906. Previous British treaties relating to Tibet had contained only vague references to boundaries and, although the Indian government had been moved to define a small section of the Indo-Tibetan border for the purpose of settling a dispute over Sikkim in 1890, Tibet's northern borders were quite unknown to westerners. East Tibetan borders were even more of a mystery, and here its status was further confused by an announcement from the Chinese that the territory would shortly form part of a new Chinese province to be known as Sikang.[28]

It was already acknowledged in London that the Indian government was unwilling to accept any definition of Tibet based upon Chinese suzerainty, which Curzon had earlier referred to as a 'constitutional fiction', and Grey felt reluctant to press for a definition from China for fear of complicating the situation even further.[29] As in the past, the possibility of consulting the Lhasa authorities did not seem to occur to anyone. All further attempts to pursue the problem discreetly were therefore abandoned until, in January 1907, Izvolsky once again raised the issue. In an effort to find a solution to the problem this time Nicolson produced a definition of Tibet based upon information supplied to him by the Indian government. This included as part of Tibet, Upper Tsaidam and Tahji, both areas currently being informally administered by China. Izvolsky

asked for time to study the relevant maps but it was obvious that he already found this interpretation highly contentious and it began to dawn on both sides that, in order to get an acceptable alternative view, they would have to ask the Chinese. The Chinese proved as unhelpful over this as they had been over the issue of the travel ban and informed British and Russian ministers to Peking that there would be no need to define Tibet because her boundaries had remained unchanged for centuries.[30] In the same way as Younghusband's activities had stimulated Chinese interest in the country, Jordan became convinced that these attempts to define Tibet also had the unfortunate effect of increasing Chinese awareness of the area. The very fact that the issue had been raised at all forced them to reassess their own understanding of where the borders of Tibet began and ended, and in the process allowed them to see even greater opportunities for territorial gain.[31]

There is no mention of Mongolia in the final treaty, yet, for a while at least, discussions about Mongolia also threatened the success of the talks. As time went on Nicolson began to appreciate that the Russians saw Mongolia and Tibet as linked issues and that their interest in the Dalai Lama was partly a by-product of their Mongolian policy.[32] After Younghusband left Lhasa in 1904 the Russians had initially wanted the Dalai Lama to return to Tibet as soon as possible in order to help them to stabilise their frontier and retain their existing influence over their mainly Buddhist Mongolian subjects. However, by November 1906 they had changed their minds and now appeared happy for him to remain where he was at the Kumbum monastery near Sining, where he stayed in close contact with the Mongolian princes who venerated him as a leader of their Buddhist church.[33] Unlike the British, the Russians were only too aware of the historical, political and religious links between Mongolia and Tibet because many Russian subjects were Buddhist, and one of the strategies in Russia's Central Asian policy had been to promote these links as far as possible. At its most basic level their plan was to try to persuade the British to accept the principle of Russian involvement in Mongolia in return for allowing British interests in Tibet to stand. The complication here, however, was that the Russians had rivals for Mongolia. Britain's new allies, the Japanese, had an ambitious Asian forward policy of their own and included Mongolia within their sphere of influence. Japanese agents working inside the country were very obviously encouraging the Chinese to tighten their control of those parts of Mongolia traditionally associated with the Manchu in order to pave the way for a Japanese takeover at a later date. The situation had been complicated by the Russo-Japanese War of 1904/5 in which the Russians had experienced a totally unexpected and humiliating defeat at Japanese hands, and this, together with the formation of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance in 1902, had curbed, though not entirely extinguished, Russian ambitions in Central Asia.

Prompted by strong pressure from the powerful Russian Military Party,

Izvolsky had been ordered to formally raise the subject of Mongolia in July 1906, and again in January 1907, during the negotiations for the Anglo-Russian Convention in St Petersburg in the hope of thwarting Japanese plans for the country. British reluctance to associate themselves with any move which might endanger their good relations with the Japanese, however, necessitated a negative response to Russian proposals to discuss Mongolia in the Tibetan context on each occasion.[34] Grey was particularly unhappy about any moves which might widen the talks and risk upsetting either Japan or China and so make it even more difficult to extricate Britain from Tibetan affairs. The most he was willing to offer, therefore, were vague 'diplomatic assurances' that Britain would approach the Chinese with a view to getting them to refrain from aggressive activity on the borders of Mongolia, together with a promise that he would try to persuade the Japanese to do the same.[35]

For Minto, a recognition of Russian interest in Mongolia was not a great price to pay for a mutual recognition of British rights in Tibet, but once again he found himself at odds with Morley who opposed linking Mongolian and Tibetan affairs. Like Grey, Morley believed that any concessions made to Russia in Mongolia would not automatically guarantee a reciprocal arrangement for Britain in Tibet because, when the British eventually concluded an adhesion treaty with China in 1906, they had effectively forfeited all rights to move freely north of the Himalayas.[36] Attempts by the Japanese to try to persuade both Grey and the Russians that they had no interest in Mongolia during the early months of 1907 brought an end to what might otherwise have developed into a prolonged and bitter confrontation, and the matter was officially dropped in March of that year when the Foreign Office informed the Russian ambassador to London that Britain could not interfere in matters which they believed to be private Chinese concerns.[37] The Mongolian issue had been concluded but was to remain a loose end that would return to haunt the British, as Japanese involvement in Mongolia became very obvious after 1907 and as the Anglo-Japanese alliance gradually began to dissolve in rivalry over mutual competing interests in the Yangtse basin, which came to a head during the course of the First World War.

A further issue that hovered on the edge of the talks, but which also ultimately remained unresolved, was the thorny problem of the conduct of frontier trade. In February 1907 Nicolson had presented Izvolsky with a draft document, together with the agreed changes to points which the Russians had raised about trade. He was concerned that some agreement be reached on the issue because a well-established and highly lucrative Russo-Tibetan trade flourished on the frontier and, although it was known to the British that only one large Russian caravan crossed into Tibet annually, details of how smaller traders operated near the borders of Tibet remained a mystery. The main problem here was how to ensure that Russian traders were protected without allowing the Russian military to

violate the ban on frontier travel. Nicolson was not too concerned about this because he regarded the protection and conduct of trade with Tibet as essentially a matter for the Chinese, but Izvolsky was anxious to ensure that Russian subjects could trade in safety. He was also anxious about what appeared to be a growing British presence in this restricted area and drew Nicolson's attention to a recently published article in a British journal which referred rather intriguingly to 'towns' and a 'railway line' being opened up inside Tibet by the British themselves. Nicolson saw 'towns' as an obvious reference to the new trade agencies created under the Lhasa Convention, but could only dismiss the 'railway line' as rumour, thus inviting even more urgent requests for clarification from Izvolsky. Grey's refusal to allow further discussion of the situation prevented any resolution to this problem, which had the predictable effect of fuelling unhealthy Russian speculation about what might be really happening on the frontier long after the Anglo-Russian Convention had been signed.[38]

A further problem, this time directly involving the Tibetans themselves, threatened to divide Britain and Russia in late 1906. Russia had always tried to claim a special interest status in Tibet because of the need for Russian Buddhists to retain their physical and spiritual links with the Dalai Lama by visiting temples inside the country. When the Dalai Lama had fled his capital in 1904 he had travelled extensively in Mongolia and western China, but, though happy with this arrangement in the short term, the Russians foresaw a time when he would return to Lhasa and wanted to include provision for Russian Buddhists to continue their practice of visiting him there, as had been the case before the Younghusband expedition had arrived. Grey was alert to the possibility that the Russians might choose to exploit this privilege by packing Lhasa with Russian spies disguised as monks, as he believed had been the case with Aghvan Dorjiev, but in the interests of moving the talks along it was agreed that Russian Buddhists might travel on the frontier, provided that it was exclusively on 'religious business'.[39] As with the problem of trade this was but a temporary solution and did not help to ease British suspicions of Russian intentions, as their reactions to any news of the presence of Dorjiev anywhere near Tibet would later prove.

In addition to the problems of Mongolia, trade and travel there was great controversy within British circles about the wisdom of including Tibet in any formal agreement with Russia. In Peking, for example, British minister John Jordan opposed the Tibetan part of the Convention on the grounds that it would ultimately prove injurious to British interests by strengthening Chinese influence there.[40] Some of the terms of the Convention had also sparked further conflict between Minto and Morley. Morley had seen the *rapprochement* with Russia as an ideal way to remove the last vestiges of Curzonian forward policy from Asia and did his utmost to promote the talks, whereas Minto had made it very clear from the start that he believed the future of Tibet to be a frontier problem to be sorted

out with Russia in India. In London meanwhile, Grey continued to believe in the Convention as the only means of settling the frontier and halting any possibility of a continuing Russian interest in India's borders.[41]

The Anglo-Russian Convention, eventually ratified in August 1907, was broadly successful in ending Anglo-Russian rivalry in Central Asia, but the course of the discussions surrounding the separate Tibetan treaty had also drawn attention to a whole range of minor issues which remained unsolved – and, as Alastair Lamb has observed, the Convention gave Russia an excuse to involve herself in any future Anglo-Tibetan conflicts while at the same time blocking any future British progress there, a situation ideally suited to Whitehall but certainly not to Lord Minto and the government of India, which had begun to see China as a serious threat to Indian frontier security as well as to their own interests in Tibet.[42]

The Chinese adhesion treaty and the indemnity crisis

By far the most significant and long-lasting effect of the Younghusband expedition for Britain and Tibet was the dynamic impact it had on China who lost no time in presenting the British advance as an invasion of part of her empire. Initial attempts to ease Anglo-Chinese tensions were therefore made by the British almost immediately in an effort to persuade the Chinese to sign a formal adhesion to the Lhasa Convention and so avoid any future frontier disputes that might entangle them even further in Tibetan affairs.

When the question of an adhesion treaty was first raised almost immediately after the Lhasa Convention was signed in September 1904, there were encouraging indications that the Chinese were prepared to co-operate. While Younghusband was still in Lhasa, for example, their *amban*, Yu Tai, had telegraphed Peking to say that, in his opinion, the Convention 'contained nothing subversive of Chinese suzerainty'.[43] At the time of Younghusband's departure more than a week later, moreover, Yu Tai had received no word from Peking to suggest that they had any objection to signing an adhesion treaty, even though they had not permitted him to sign the Convention itself. In a spirit of optimism, therefore, the British minister to Peking, Sir Ernest Satow, informed London on the 27 September that the Chinese had appointed a former customs officer from Tientsin named Tang Shao-yi to act as a 'special investigator' in Tibet and that, after promoting him to the rank of lieutenant deputy, had ordered him to Lhasa with instructions to 'investigate the conduct of affairs there'. In the misguided belief that the Chinese were happy to accept the Lhasa Convention, Satow was told to reassure them about 'certain points' in the Treaty about which they had expressed 'misgivings', while at the same time hint to them that the British government intended the Convention to stand with or without Chinese agreement.[44]

After this promising start, however, things soon began to go badly

wrong. Younghusband had left Lhasa only four days after Tang's appointment, ruling out any opportunity for the two men to meet and sign an agreement on the spot, and it soon became apparent that the Chinese were not prepared to accept the Lhasa Convention as it stood. They made it clear that they considered it to be a direct challenge to their rights under the *cho-yon* to conduct Tibet's foreign affairs, and that it also prevented them enjoying exclusive rights to their lucrative trade with Tibet to which they believed themselves entitled. They argued that accepting the Convention would obviously involve them in a serious loss of face, exposing their weakness to other foreign powers who might then seize the opportunity to make fresh concession demands inside China proper. In Peking, Satow had some sympathy for their predicament.[45]

The Indian government were more content than London to leave the situation as it was and to allow the Convention to stand without Chinese adhesion, arguing that it could not fail to involve the British in difficult and protracted negotiations ultimately harmful to Anglo-Chinese relations, as well as to longer-term frontier security.[46]

The Foreign Office in London were alarmed by Satow's reports of increasingly extravagant Chinese claims to Tibet and were also having to contend with mounting international criticism of the Younghusband expedition, which was being widely portrayed in the international press as an aggressive invasion of the country. By the end of 1905 the Liberal government found themselves unwittingly involved in an ugly situation not of their making and made infinitely worse by the growing rift between those in London wishing to placate China, and those in India who believed that Chinese adhesion, like *rapprochement* with Russia, was both undesirable and unnecessary. In such circumstances Grey concluded that securing Chinese adhesion was crucial if the fledgling Liberal non-involvement policy was to have any chance of survival.[47]

Having lost their initial battle to prevent talks opening while Curzon was still at the helm, the Indian government continued to try to salvage as much as possible of what they saw as Indian gains from the Lhasa Convention. Their first triumph was to succeed in getting the talks held in Calcutta, rather than in Peking as London had initially proposed. They were delivered another boost when the negotiations collapsed after eight months in November 1905, on the eve of Curzon's final departure from India and shortly before Balfour's government fell to the Liberals. By now it was becoming obvious in London that the process of determining the exact nature of Tibet's status *vis-à-vis* China was going to be a difficult and protracted business.[48]

The Chinese now began to demand that their sovereignty over Tibet be officially recognised. At first, this had not seemed to the British to present a problem as Chinese suzerainty had been acknowledged by them in various treaties since Chefoo in 1876. The real sticking point came when it was realised that Chinese claims to Tibet had never been clearly defined,

the terms 'suzerainty' and 'sovereignty' being used randomly, even in official correspondence. In July 1905, less than four months after they began, talks were blocked over this very question, with British delegates defining Chinese rights as 'suzerain' and Chinese delegates defining them as 'sovereign'.[49]

At this point the Indian government decided to force the issue by ordering their delegate, Indian Foreign Secretary S.M. Fraser, to present his Chinese counterpart, the 'special adviser to Tibet, Tang Shao-yi, with a draft agreement for signature. Tang's response was to acquire what most people at the time believed to be a 'diplomatic illness', and he left Calcutta almost immediately after petitioning Peking to be allowed to return to China. Tang's place was then taken by his former secretary, Chang Yintang, whose unexpected promotion to senior Chinese delegate to the talks would have serious consequences for India in the months to come. Within days of Tang's departure Fraser completed his term as Indian foreign secretary to be replaced by Louis Dane, a man with a very clear idea of how he wanted the talks to proceed.[50]

The Conference now continued with fresh negotiators on both sides. Since Chang had renewed the lease on the house being used by the Chinese delegation in Calcutta for a further six months, it looked very much as though, having acquired this breathing space, the Chinese expected the talks to resume as before. Encouraged by this, and within days of finally leaving India for the last time, Curzon arranged for Chang to be presented with the draft treaty previously offered to Tang for signature. When Chang also refused to sign, London was forced to admit defeat, and the first stage of the negotiations faltered without conclusion.[51]

If the new Liberal administration had expected their new viceroy, Lord Minto, to alter Indian attitudes towards Chinese adhesion they were to be disappointed. Minto was no more willing than Curzon to enter into discussions about Tibet with China, let alone treat with the Chinese about any territory bordering India. Soon after taking office he began to press for the internment of the Dalai Lama and for the indemnity payments set by the Lhasa Convention to be paid in full by Tibet, a position bringing him into direct conflict with the new non-involvement policy. The Liberals hoped that the Tibetan 'problem' could be settled by securing Chinese adhesion to the Lhasa Convention and were even more determined than their Unionist predecessor had been to push for a resumption of the talks at whatever the cost to their future relations with India, a real blow to any chances of an harmonious partnership between the Indian government and the India Office.

The problem of how to revive the adhesion talks now moved to the British legation in Peking who seemed reluctant to take up the gauntlet. As British minister, Satow knew that he would have to host any revived talks in Peking itself if they were to have any chance of success, although

he had his own private reservations about the consequences for the China Service who would now have to shoulder the responsibility for their success or failure. He need not have worried unduly, however, for though some thorny issues continued to dog progress during this second stage of talks, there was also a willingness on both sides to come to agreement and an adhesion treaty was duly signed in Peking on 27 April 1906, to be ratified in London three months later.[52]

The success of the second round of talks had been mainly due to the fact that they had been held in Peking and not in Calcutta, but they had also been affected by Minto's decision to concentrate on those aspects of the treaty over which he thought he could exercise some control, namely the indemnity payments claimed from Tibet. Throughout the course of the negotiations, and for some time after they were concluded, a long battle was waged between India and the Foreign Office in London over how and when the indemnity might be paid, a contest which would affect Anglo-Chinese relations and which would also determine the success of the trade regulation talks that followed.

The imposition of the huge indemnity under the terms of the Lhasa Convention had been a great and continuing source of friction between Tibet and Britain. The Tibetans insisted that they could not afford to pay it and were naturally unwilling to accept that the situation was non-negotiable. They argued that in signing the Lhasa Convention they had understood the terms to be flexible and that, under their laws, if one party got only half the things they had bargained for they would be satisfied. They also insisted that in asking for the full amount the British were being extremely unreasonable. Obvious disparity in approach to treaty making was a large factor in this tragic failure to communicate. Without a Foreign Office as such the Tibetans were quite unused to dealing directly with non-Asian powers, a fact well appreciated by the leaders of other Himalayan states who had tried to intervene on their behalf on previous occasions. During his time in Lhasa Younghusband had pursued the question of the indemnity obsessively, refusing to retreat an inch, despite attempts by the Tsonga Penlop of Bhutan and others to persuade him to see sense. It was hard for him not to see the indemnity issue in personal terms since, having in his view been the butt of quite unwarranted aggression, he believed that the Tibetans must be asked to pay for the needless suffering endured by members of his expedition during its slow progress across Tibet. The indemnity was also linked in his mind to Indian claims to the Chumbi valley and, by making it as high as possible, Younghusband had hoped to secure a British occupation of the valley for a period of at least seventy-five years.[53]

Matters reached a crisis over the indemnity payments when Sir Edward Grey took office at the end of 1905, and reports began to reach the British legation in Peking that the Chinese had posted proclamations in the Chumbi valley offering to pay the entire amount on Tibet's behalf. In

forwarding this information to London and Calcutta, Satow recommended that Britain should not agree to accept the Chinese offer on the grounds that it was probably a first stage in a wider plan which aimed to claim outright sovereignty over Tibet. His view was supported by the subject matter under discussion during the revived adhesion talks in which the arguments for and against the idea of China's sovereignty over Tibet resurfaced as a major aspect of the negotiations. Grey also endorsed Satow's view, firstly because he had no wish to unduly antagonise the Indian government, who had made it quite plain that they supported Younghusband in viewing the payments as a punitive measure against the Tibetans, but secondly, and most importantly, because he did not believe that the tottering Manchu dynasty could afford to pay. London's refusal to accept the payment in full from the Chinese would also have damaging consequences for future Anglo-Chinese relations, as well as for Tibet however, as the Chinese took this rebuttal as yet another direct challenge to their authority inside Tibet – almost equal to the threat posed by the Younghusband invasion itself.[54]

While London and Peking discussed Chinese involvement Minto continued to insist that the full cost of the indemnity be met by the Tibetans themselves and, in accordance with the terms of the Lhasa Convention, a demand for the first payment was issued on 1 January 1906. In an effort to move things forward Morley then attempted to tie the issue of the indemnity payments to the negotiations for the adhesion treaty itself. He did not agree that China should be allowed to supply the full indemnity payment on Tibet's behalf immediately, but he did suggest that they should be permitted to pay off one instalment after they had signed the treaty, and the rest after 'a suitable period of time'.[55] When the adhesion treaty was eventually signed in April 1906, therefore, the principle of Chinese payment had been accepted by the British Foreign Office, encouraging the Chinese to move one step forward in their plan to make Tibet formally part of their vast empire by claiming sovereignty over the country as a right under new international law.

The Chinese also pressed their advantage by offering to pay off the entire indemnity in three instalments, a device which Minto particularly distrusted because he saw it as an attempt to force the British out of Chumbi before the full amount had been paid. Even Morley hesitated before accepting this offer, but he came to be persuaded that the advantages of occupying the Chumbi valley for so long were far outweighed by the disadvantages of having to enforce the direct annual payment of 1 lakh for seventy-five years, under the terms of the existing Lhasa Convention.[56] When the adhesion treaty was finally signed, therefore, Grey agreed to accept just three instalments of 25 lakh, all of which were to be paid by China. This decision not only created great bitterness in India but had the unfortunate effect of dangerously undermining British prestige inside Tibet at a time when Chinese confidence was growing.

The Trade Regulation Treaty, 1908

British relations with China were further complicated by the protracted negotiations over trade which led to the conclusion of a new Trade Regulation Treaty in 1908.

In April 1906 Frederick O'Connor, in London on leave from his post as British trade agent at Gyanste, sent a letter to the India Office on the subject of frontier trade. In this unsolicited and lengthy document he begged Morley to remember the vital part played by trade in India's original plan for Tibet, and urged him to consider various recommendations for improvements to the existing situation there. These improvements included a scheme to open a new trade mart in south-east Tibet, and a plan to build a tarmac road linking the Chumbi valley to India. O'Connor's ideas were not innovatory but had formed part of a wider campaign for development inside Tibet which he and fellow Curzonians believed to be implicit in the terms of the Lhasa Convention which he himself had drafted.[57] In the event, and in the light of the non-involvement policy, his report was simply noted by the India Office, but British forward policy remained an important issue for trade agents like O'Connor who believed that the development of trading links between India and Tibet would help correct the problems created by the earlier trade regulations treaties of 1890 and 1893 which had helped to destabilise frontier trade.

Originally Phari had been selected as a suitable base from which to conduct Indo-Tibetan trade and from where a network of trading stations could then be opened up across the whole of Tibet. This was because the Tibetans already had a tax office there, and its position at the head of the Chumbi valley and on the main Kalimpong to Lhasa road made it seem an ideal location for a British mart; but strong opposition from the Phari *jongpon*, and from the Chinese (who had already stationed trade agents in the town), had forced the Indian government to think again and Yatung was eventually chosen. It had soon proved to be a poor alternative, however, and had never functioned effectively as a trade mart before the Lhasa Convention was signed in 1904.[58]

Having reluctantly accepted Yatung as a mart for Indian traders in 1890, and having yielded over a number of connected issues like the parity of status between the Indian and Tibetan traders using it, the Indian government expected the Chinese to co-operate over the lucrative tea and wool trade conducted there. However, this proved not to be the case and, in a effort to calm growing tensions, Sir James Hart, British-born inspector-general of the Chinese Customs Service and China's delegate to the revived regulation talks of 1893, succeeded in securing approval for a clause in the final treaty allowing for a review of the situation after a period of five years. Unfortunately for India, although his suggestion certainly diffused tensions at the time, it also stored up problems for the future by blocking further discussions about the organisation of trade

until 1899, giving plenty of scope for local conflicts to harden into long-standing disputes by the time Lord Curzon became viceroy.[59]

Despite all the difficulties surrounding the signing of the Trade Regulation Treaty of December 1893, it had been hoped that this agreement between Britain and China would herald a new era for Indo-Tibetan trade as well as for Anglo-Chinese relations. This was not to be, for soon after the Treaty was concluded the frontier situation rapidly deteriorated, and the Tibetans, who had not even been consulted during in the negotiations, flouted the Treaty terms almost immediately, providing Curzon with a convenient excuse to unleash Younghusband in 1903.[60]

By late 1904 and throughout 1905, city syndicates and Indian traders pressed for a revision of the 1893 trade regulations. Their appetites had been whetted by the discovery of gold and other precious metals and gems on the East Tibetan frontier, confirmed in trade reports on Sichuan and East Tibet which had been conducted at great personal risk by Sir Alexander Hosie of the China Consular Service.[61] Since the 1880s individuals had been sent out by private companies in Britain and India to explore and excavate possible trade routes across Tibet in order to bring Chinese and Tibetan wealth to India. This had included plans to construct a railway link from Burma to China and a brave, but ultimately futile attempt, to use steam boats on the upper reaches of the Yangtse river in a bid to reach the borders of Tibet.[62] During the Younghusband expedition itself Dr Austine Waddell had identified and compiled a comprehensive list of gold mines in Tibet and had also discovered that they were underworked, Tibetan miners reluctant to disturb the earth beneath their feet too much for fear of waking the evil spirits lurking beneath.[63] O'Connor's letter to the India Office in 1906 had reiterated this information and had gone on to stress the importance of opening trade marts as a means of tapping Tibet's hidden resources for the benefit of India.[64]

In the event, all these enthusiastic reports containing various proposals for the development of the tea and wool trade inside Tibet were deliberately suppressed by the Foreign Office in London who were both unwilling and unable to commit to such grandiose commercial projects. The Indian government on the other hand displayed great interest in these schemes and raised the issue of trade development at every possible opportunity throughout the duration of the trade regulation negotiations.[65]

As well as the keen interest taken by businessmen and entrepreneurs in mining gold and minerals in Tibet there was also a growing fascination with tea and in particular, with the idea of challenging the Chinese monopoly of brick tea which the Tibetans loved and drank in vast quantities. For many years Indian tea companies like the Cess Tea Company Limited had been experimenting with methods of brick tea production, and in 1906, they sent their own commissioner, a Mr Hutchinson, to Sichuan to study the process at first hand. British trade agents at Chumbi and Gyantse also became actively involved in the promotion of Indian tea and were not

averse to using devious means to persuade the Tibetans to accept it, often disguising it to look like brick tea in order to try to make it more appealing.[66] The development of the tea trade became vitally important to a number of powerful vested interests in Britain, and by the summer of 1906 Minto felt moved to draw up a list of provisional points that might be taken as a formal review of the 1893 trade regulations, a move not calculated to endear him to those Chinese merchants who relied heavily for their survival on their tea trade with Tibet.

Talks to revamp the 1893 trade regulations were finally opened in Simla on 24 August 1907. The Chinese were quick to demonstrate their interest in the talks by sending as their delegate, the high flyer Chang Yin-tang who had stepped into Tang's shoes during the adhesion talks, and who was already well known and disliked by the Indian government for his hostility towards British trade agents working in Tibet. Indian foreign secretary, Louis Dane, and Eric Wilton of the China Consular Service, represented British interests at the talks, and Frederick O'Connor was recalled from Gyantse to act as 'special adviser' to the Tibetan representative Tsarong Shape. This was the first time that Tibetans had been represented at any trade talks and Minto wanted to ensure that their concerns were met, if only because this might make it easier for his trade agents to function safely and effectively inside Tibet.[67]

From the beginning it was obvious that the discussions were not going to be restricted to trade. Chang Yin-tang moved quickly to use the talks as a means of tying up the loose ends left by the Lhasa Convention and the adhesion talks which followed, because by now the Chinese were anxious to establish a political claim to Tibet that would be recognised by the British under international law. Eric Wilton, there to disentangle Britain from any outstanding commitments in Tibet, found himself instantly at odds with the Indian delegates who were there to protect Indian gains secured under the Lhasa Convention. Minto hoped to use the talks as a weapon in his campaign to retain a British presence at Chumbi, while Grey saw it as a means of extracting promises of co-operation from the Chinese over the as yet unresolved and still-contentious issue of the indemnity payments. Meanwhile, at the India Office, Morley adopted a similar approach to the one he had taken over the recently concluded negotiations for the Anglo-Russian Convention and was determined that this would mark the end of Curzonian influence on the frontier.[68]

The question of the status of the Tibetan delegates was the first problem to develop into a major conflict. The Chinese had been reluctant to accept Tsarong as a fully accredited delegate because of the obvious implications this had for their control over Tibetan affairs. Dane, Wilton and O'Connor were forceful in defending his status, but, as usual in their dealings with the Chinese at this time, Britain eventually conceded ground and agreed a compromise entirely suited to Chinese plans to upgrade their claims to Tibet. As a result, Tsarong became Tibet's 'Fully

Authorised Representative, to act under the direction of Chang' and, as Parshotam Mehra has observed, was now little more than 'Chang's puppet' for the duration of the talks.[69]

The negotiations quickly became inextricably involved with the issue of the Tibetan indemnity (which China wanted to pay on Tibet's behalf), and with the date yet to be set for the British withdrawal from the Chumbi valley. Minto, deliberately exploiting the indemnity issue as a means of making gains for India, told Morley in December 1906 that he wanted the second instalment paid by the Chinese at Gyantse in strict accordance with the terms of the Convention, and not in Calcutta as the Chinese wanted. In the interests of moving the talks forward, and in order to avoid further complicated wrangles with India, Morley agreed. Minto then used this minor victory to persuade Grey to make a formal complaint to Chang about the behaviour of Chinese officials inside Tibet, and in particular about Chang himself whose recent promotion to Chinese High Commissioner for Tibet had coincided with aggressive and obstructive Chinese tactics at the Tibetan trade marts. Chinese responses to these complaints were predictably non-committal, possibly because, even at this early stage, the authorities in Peking found themselves unable to keep a rein on Chang's activities from such a distance.[70]

In December 1907, the British minister to Peking Sir John Jordan reported that the Chinese were preparing to make the final indemnity payment on Tibet's behalf and wanted to fix a date for the withdrawal of British troops from the Chumbi valley as soon as possible after the payment had been made. Minto once again seized the opportunity afforded by these discussions to raise further strong objections to Chang's behaviour, this time warning London that the situation on the frontier was now deteriorating to a point where conditions might soon warrant a second British intervention.[71] Further escalation of frontier tensions was only prevented this time by the payment of the final indemnity instalment at Gyantse on 21 January 1908, over three weeks later than agreed, and then only after Chang had made an abortive last minute attempt to make the payment in Calcutta. On this occasion the Chinese had given way to British pressure and had failed to support their powerful High Commissioner for Tibet, an obvious indication to a government less obsessed with the need to withdraw from the country that they might have taken far more from the talks than they did, and a further source of exasperation to Minto, who now felt cheated out of any concessions he might have gained to ensure the safety of his frontier officers and the protection of India's new commercial rights in Tibet. When British troops finally pulled out of the Chumbi valley in February 1908 it seemed to many in India that they took with them a last golden opportunity to retain and extend the gains made by Younghusband, leaving a legacy of bitterness to sour their future relations with London.[72]

After the British evacuation the talks became involved with wider

political issues and it was over six weeks before they were finally concluded on 20 August 1908. The Indian government were upset by the way in which they had been conducted, as well as with the terms which, like those of the Anglo-Russian Convention of the previous year, seemed to them to give even greater power to China at India's expense. In Minto's view the talks had been a disaster, resulting in the dismantling of his future plans for the further expansion of Indo-Tibetan trade, and, after the signing ceremony, his worst fears were confirmed when India's trade with Tibet slowly deteriorated as Chang's protégés began to harass and obstruct Indian traders more than ever.[73]

Despite their pessimism the Indian government did derive some benefits from the 1908 Trade Regulations Treaty. Many of the minor misunderstandings that had arisen between Tibetan, Chinese, and British agents at the trade marts could now be sorted out more easily by reference to the Treaty which, among other things, had defined the limits of the Gyantse Mart, always a bone of contention. In addition, the final completion of a telegraph line to India allowed speedier communications and meant that British troops could be quickly summoned to rescue British personnel in the event of a sudden crisis. In terms of the gains Minto had hoped to make, however, these benefits were meagre indeed since they left British trade agents inside Tibet quite powerless to administer existing trade let alone develop any further commercial initiatives along the lines envisaged by O'Connor in his letter to the India Office in April 1906. With Chinese interference increasing dramatically soon after the Regulations were signed, and with British prestige at a very low ebb, ensuring the personal safety of his staff now became Minto's key concern.

These brave attempts by the Liberal government to pacify and disentangle Britain from her Tibetan commitments had met with very mixed results. It was not so easy to dismiss the Younghusband invasion as a mistake or to convince either the Chinese or the Russians that Britain had no future interest in Tibet. The main problem had come from India in the person of the new viceroy, Lord Minto, who had quickly established his own agenda and was determined to ensure that the role of viceroy – considerably strengthened under Curzon – would continue to function as the main controller of British frontier policy without interference from London. If anything, the events of 1904–1908 had served only to exaggerate the danger of the non-involvement policy and convince him of the need to continue to defend, albeit discreetly, the gains that India had made in Tibet.

For the Tibetans the non-involvement policy had merely afforded Britain an opportunity to interfere actively in Tibetan affairs without reducing Chinese influence. The Treaties of 1906 and 1908, which London had initiated in an attempt to settle the frontier and protect India from invasion, had simply consolidated what the Lhasa Convention had begun, for British agents were now operating inside Tibet itself and the Lhasa authorities were powerless to stop them.

3 Beyond the frontier

The British Administration in Tibet, 1904–1908

> [N]ot withstanding all you say about the Man on the Spot, I humbly reply that this is just what the Government of India is not.
>
> Lord Morley, January 1908

While others tried to rectify by diplomatic means what they perceived to be the damage caused by the Younghusband invasion and the Lhasa Convention that followed, the men on the spot, who worked as trade agents inside Tibet, were left to cope with the daily business of administration in the face of mounting political and psychological pressure, and in the growing awareness that the British Foreign Office were prepared to give little in the way of positive support.

Between the signing of the Lhasa Convention and the evacuation of Chumbi in February 1908 a kind of British administration struggled to survive at the trade marts in Yatung and Gyantse. The men selected to become trade agents at these marts had been handpicked by Curzon and had been key members of the Younghusband expedition. A post at Chumbi, mainly set up to help with the administration at Yatung, boosted the British presence in the Chumbi valley, while at the older established mart at Gartok it was considered wiser to employ an agent who was related to the local tribal leader and who might therefore be better placed to understand the special conditions in this less-contentious area. Observing them all from a safe distance was the overworked British political officer in Sikkim who, as well as monitoring Tibet, also had responsibility for Sikkim and Bhutan.[1]

The men appointed to the trade marts at Yatung and Gyantse and the post at Chumbi came from the prestigious Indian Political Department and were widely referred to as the 'Politicals'. These men enjoyed a freedom and status denied to others because they came under the direct jurisdiction of the viceroy himself. A posting with the Politicals offered a fascinating alternative to a boringly predictable career in other departments of the Indian Civil Service (ICS) for the adventurous youth willing to take a career gamble. The lucky few appointed served as political agents

in the various Indian states; as administrative officers on the north-east and north-west frontiers of India; and as consular officials on the Indian borders and in Persia. Although the north-west Frontier had long been considered the more glamorous posting it was also far more dangerous, and after Younghusband reached Lhasa in 1904 the attractions of the remoter and more exotic north-east frontier, that included Tibet, fired the imagination of these men. Employment on this frontier offered adventure without too much danger, as well as the excitement of the unknown since much of it was still unexplored; by 1904 there was great competition for postings there.

There were four possible routes into the Politicals. The first was via the army. Two-thirds of all recruits entered the Service in this way and young army officers like Frederick Bailey, a member of the Younghusband expedition and later trade agent at Gyantse, were drawn to the Indian frontier as an antidote to an otherwise claustrophobic and anonymous life in army barracks.[2]

A second, more obvious route was by way of the ICS, and the majority of men not recruited from the army came in this way. The Politicals offered men like Charles Bell an opportunity to escape the Indian plains (where the harsh climate had already ruined his health before he reached the age of thirty), and a safe yet boring office posting at Simla, which threatened to destroy his sanity. Like Bailey, Bell had also been a member of the Younghusband expedition and, after serving a term as Claude White's deputy at Sikkim, he eventually succeeded him as political officer in 1908, remaining there until his retirement in 1920.[3]

A third route into the Service came via the Indian Medical Corps. Here men of high calibre competed for posts which offered the possibility of substantial career enhancement, either by becoming surgeons to wealthy maharajah or, on the frontier itself, working for the Indian government. If chosen for the Politicals these men enjoyed an independence and a particular prestige amongst Himalayan tribal peoples, including the Tibetans, who were usually grateful for the free medical care they offered in return for the chance to study and record a whole range of previously undocumented diseases. During the Younghusband expedition Dr Augustine Waddell and his medical team had treated the wounds of Tibetan prisoners, some of whom had shown their gratitude by staying with the British party throughout the remaining journey to Lhasa. This experience then made it much easier for those British doctors later attached to the trade marts inside Tibet to treat the sick without hindrance.[4] Even when the British withdrew from Chumbi in February 1908, for example, they were allowed to leave a dispensary behind, ostensibly for the benefit of the local population but also because its presence there enabled the Indian government to continue to monitor events in the Chumbi valley long after their troops had left.[5]

A fourth and final route into the Politicals was by way of the Indian

Public Works and Engineering Department. Engineers and surveyors from this department could sometimes transfer into the Service in order to build the transport and cable systems badly needed on the frontier by the British. Claude White had come to the Service this way, by his own admission sacrificing a promising engineering career in order to take on the difficult task of political officer in Sikkim between 1889 and 1908, and had also served as commissioner to the Younghusband expedition in 1903.[6]

Last but by no means least, members of the separate Native Indian Civil Service and army worked alongside British personnel, sharing the workload and the dangers of the remotest frontier posts as clerks and assistants, although, like the courageous Indian pundits before them, their names were rarely recorded in official correspondence.[7]

In June 1906, soon after the adhesion treaty had been signed, the Chinese had sent Chang Yin-tang to India in his capacity as 'Special Commissioner for Tibet' to prepare for what they described as a 'trade mission' to the country. In reality Chang was being sent to Tibet to implement a new Chinese forward policy and, at the same time, to issue a direct challenge to the prestige of the Indian government and their men on the spot. Chang had previously taken over from Tang Shao-yi as Chinese delegate to the adhesion talks in late 1905 and was already known to the British as a tough negotiator. News of his appointment in June 1906 created alarm in India and the flood of telegrams which then passed between Minto and Morley reflected a similar concern at the India Office.[8]

The original telegram to India announcing Chang's appointment had also contained quite detailed information about what he was expected to do once he entered Tibet. He was going there apparently 'to arrange the opening of Trade Marts' in a move calculated to antagonise the Indian government by seeking to re-establish China's right to resume control over those aspects of the Tibetan trade which, in their view, had been threatened by both the Lhasa Convention and the adhesion treaty. There were further raised eyebrows in India when it was discovered that Chang intended to ask Minto to supply him with transport and facilities for his journey to Tibet, together with a request for a face-to-face meeting with Indian foreign secretary, Sir Louis Dane.[9]

These requests created a great problem for Minto. Firstly, if he allowed Chang's party to use the quickest and easiest route into Tibet via the Shipki Pass, which entered Tibet from Simla, he might set a dangerous future precedent, a view strongly supported by Morley. Secondly, the implications for any discussions about trade with China would inevitably destabilise and possibly endanger existing Anglo-Tibetan relations at the marts, particularly as the Chinese still did not consider it necessary to involve the Tibetans themselves in any talks about trade. With this in mind, therefore, Morley supported Minto's proposal to agree to supply Chang with transport and permission to use the Shipki route, but only on

the understanding that this was a special occasion and one which could only stand if Mr Calvart, the assistant commissioner at Kulu, was allowed unrestricted travel on the frontier as a concession for this favour.[10] Morley felt that it might be possible to salvage the situation by allowing Chang to open trade talks at the marts inside Tibet, but with the strict proviso that Minto did not seek to enter into any formal commitments with China without reference to London.[11] The panic generated by the announcement of Chang's appointment is, in itself, indicative of the high level of uncertainty about the status of Tibet at this time, despite the recent signing of the adhesion treaty which had aimed to sort out Anglo-Chinese differences on the subject, but which had obviously succeeded only in generating fresh tensions.

The interview between Chang and Dane took place as arranged in Simla on 25 June 1906. Chang began by informing the Indian foreign secretary that he had been instructed to visit Gartok before going on to Lhasa in order to 'examine trade conditions' in West Tibet. The interview then continued with a discussion about the relative merits of travel to Gartok. Dane explained to Chang that the Gartok road was 'unsuitable' for a High Chinese official, being merely a 'path' across the frontier used by Indian traders, and that it would therefore be 'undesirable' to establish this route as a precedent for visiting Chinese dignitaries like himself. Dane was also at pains to point out that Gartok's good trading reputation was misleading since it was based almost exclusively upon the takings from their annual fair which always did much better than the others, being the last of the season on the Himalayan circuit. Therefore, Gartok's trade returns could not be taken as a reliable indicator of trading levels across the region as a whole. When Dane also explained that the town's main importance to India lay in its religious significance and its close proximity to Lake Manaosarovar, sacred to the Hindu, and not at all for its commercial importance, Chang appeared quite willing to drop the idea of going there altogether.[12]

Having apparently abandoned the idea of going to Gartok himself the Chinese high commissioner for Tibet now began to press Dane on the general subject of frontier trade and enquired about the advisability of installing a Chinese resident at Gartok. Dane was naturally quick to reject this idea on the grounds that the difficulties involved in collecting dues from Gartok were overwhelming because the town straddled several trade routes and because the local Tibetan *garphons* were already organised to collect them. Chang persisted, however, and asked for Dane's help with the administration of trade in the area, emphasising, 'several times', the high level of co-operation necessary now that his country had signed the adhesion treaty with Britain.[13]

What was the true purpose of Chang's visit to India? His mission was clearly concerned with trade, but in Tibet trade itself was a political issue since whoever established themselves as controllers of frontier trade

exercised real political power. Chang was obviously keen to establish his own credentials with the Indian government in order to test their attitude in the wake of the adhesion treaty, and Dane noticed that he seemed particularly 'anxious to avoid the possibility of any failure to carry out the obligation to open the Mart' but was also willing to drop the idea of going to Gartok altogether when pressed. The intention to go to Lhasa was barely mentioned and was not raised as an item for discussion by either side, but Dane was convinced that a plan to go there had been well researched and he noted that Chang had actually stated at one point in the interview that he was prepared to wait in Simla for travelling companions if the Gartok scheme fell through. It is possible of course that the Chinese had allowed their special commissioner some flexibility in his dealings with Dane. His announced intention of going to Gartok, for example, could so easily have been a red herring designed to divert attention away from his real plan to travel to Lhasa, obviously the main purpose of his visit to Tibet. During the course of the interview Chang behaved on occasions with abject humility, an approach possibly designed to reassure the Indian Foreign Secretary that his presence posed no great threat to Indian interests. His subsequent behaviour once inside Tibet, however, would indicate that he could become rude and overbearing with anyone he considered an inferior, yet totally charming and humble with anyone he wished to impress. Clearly he knew exactly what he was doing and had received a thorough briefing from his superiors before meeting Dane.[14]

In Peking, meanwhile, Jordan had believed at first that Chang was merely a tool of Tang Shao-yi, a man for whom he had great respect and whom he still considered to be the real driving force behind the new Chinese forward policy. As the policy developed and as events unravelled inside Tibet, however, he came to feel that Chang was a powerful force in his own right, often acting alone and quite beyond the control of the Peking authorities.[15]

Chang's arrival on the frontier created great problems for the Politicals inside Tibet, not only by disrupting daily business at the marts but also by complicating their relations with London, who could not always be relied upon to understand what frequently appeared to them to be dramatic overreactions to minor frontier incidents. In the rarified atmosphere of the isolated Tibetan trade marts the smallest incident might be blown up to seem much bigger, a fact that Chang was quick to grasp and exploit.

In July 1906 Major William Campbell, an assistant political officer at Chumbi, was summoned to Simla to meet Chang Yin-tang. Campbell was known to the China Consular Service, and had been highly recommended for the post at Chumbi by Ernest Satow himself, as someone with a superior knowledge of Chinese language and diplomatic practice. However,

even this experience would soon prove inadequate in the face of the kinds of problems created by Chang's arrival in Chumbi in the following September for, as Campbell subsequently explained in his reports to India, the man to whom he had been introduced at Simla bore little relation to the wily opponent he was to face in Tibet.[16]

At first confident that Chang would present him with no special diplomatic problems in the wake of the recently signed Chinese adhesion treaty, Campbell had begun to prepare for his arrival in collaboration with Mr Sung, the Chinese *pon pon* or mayor of the nearby town of Pipitang. From the beginning it was obvious that each man's perception about the nature of their visitor differed. When Sung suggested, for example, that Campbell ride out to *'chieh'* or 'greet' Chang on the road in accordance with the traditional Manchu custom of welcoming high-ranking officials, Campbell had declined to do so because it was at odds with the British practice of paying a formal courtesy call after the visitors had settled into their quarters. Campbell's refusal to meet Chang on the road was partly a tactical move intended to establish British diplomatic practice over Chinese, but it was to be the first in a series of misunderstandings that would set the tone of their first meeting inside Tibet and would also sour their future relationship, particularly in view of Campbell's growing suspicion that Chang had come to Chumbi in order to challenge British authority there. All Campbell's subsequent actions and utterances were founded upon this belief and he was supported in this view by his immediate superior, Charles Bell, then acting political officer for Sikkim, as well as by Minto himself, who had by now formed his own opinion of Chang's true motives, based upon reports of the June interview with Louis Dane. In London Grey and Morley were far less supportive and were often loath to accept Campbell's version of events in the troubled weeks to come, at one point even accusing him of adopting an inflexible and pedantic approach that played right into Chang's hands.[17]

When Campbell had first spoken to Sung before Chang's arrival neither had any idea about where this important Chinese dignitary might stay. Campbell's offer of the nearby *dak* bungalow, used by almost every European visitor to Chumbi, had been instantly rejected by Sung as quite unsuitable and Campbell was soon made aware that the Yamen at Pipitang was being completely refurbished for the visit. The inappropriateness of Campbell's offer of accommodation was now obvious to both men, and relations between them deteriorated even further when Campbell rode over to 'inspect' the Yamen, bringing with him a pair of red candles to match the red tablecloth as his sole contribution to the décor which, in the heightening tension, Sung took as a deliberate insult.[18]

As there was still no definite information as to the exact date and time of Chang's arrival Campbell decided to visit the trade mart at Yatung to take tea with Annie Taylor the British missionary living there.[19] While he was in Yatung he received an invitation to dine that evening with the local

Chinese *tsungli* or general, an offer which he gratefully accepted, there being few opportunities to socialise in such a remote posting. Until this time Campbell's relations with local Chinese officials had been fairly relaxed and informal and it seems unlikely that the *tsungli*'s invitation was part of a deliberate attempt to compromise him. From the moment of Chang's appearance in Chumbi, however, Campbell's relations with the Chinese began to go badly wrong. During dinner that evening tensions increased when a messenger arrived to say that Chang had arrived in Tibet and had passed through Yatung en route for Pipitang. Apparently taken aback, the *tsungli* then announced his immediate intention of riding out to welcome Chang in the hills above the town before he arrived at the Pipitang Yamen. Mysteriously, this information then proved to be incorrect and Campbell heard the following morning that Chang had not yet reached Yatung but that, when he did, he was planning to stay there for an unspecified period of time.

This unexpected change of schedule really worried Campbell. In the first place he was unsure of Chang's motives in choosing to visit Yatung at all, and he also feared that the new Chinese high commissioner for Tibet might be intending to interfere with the smooth running of the trade mart in an attempt to undermine British influence there. In view of the previously unreliable information supplied about Chang's movements and the apparent confusion amongst local Chinese officials like Sung and the *tsungli*, Campbell wisely decided to await confirmation of his arrival at Pipitang before taking any action in order to avoid any possibility of appearing to give official British sanction to Chang's activities at Yatung. Although he had attempted to make contact with Bell, he had as yet received no reply and was now forced to use his own initiative in a situation which seemed to be rapidly spiralling out of control. No doubt mindful of what had previously happened to Younghusband under similar circumstance, this must have been a very anxious time for him.[20] On Monday, 24 September, Campbell rode over to Pipitang. He had finally received word from a reliable source that the high commissioner's arrival there was imminent, and, in order to ensure that he had timed his visit precisely to allow Chang time to unpack and prepare himself, Campbell sent a *peon* ahead to give the Yamen adequate warning of his arrival. At 2.30 p.m. the *peon* reported the sound of celebratory fireworks and, after what he judged to be a reasonable interval, Campbell rode up to the gates of the Yamen, having sent a messenger ahead with his calling card in accordance with traditional British diplomatic practice. In his own mind Campbell had done everything he could to ensure that this first meeting with Chang inside Tibet would go smoothly, but now it seemed that there were to be unexpected complications.

Having arrived at the Yamen in the full dress uniform befitting the occasion, Campbell could see no sign of an official reception. Matters then grew worse when a servant eventually appeared and invited him to

enter the Yamen by way of a side door, and not through the main middle door as was the Manchu custom when receiving important guests. Campbell was clearly faced with a diplomatic dilemma. Anxious to behave correctly in a very delicate situation he now had to think quickly because Chang had clearly flouted established custom. If he agreed to enter through the side door in full dress uniform he would not only look ridiculous but would demonstrate to the assembled Tibetans and Chinese that he acknowledged Chang as the superior official, a very dangerous precedent to set and with possibly harmful consequences for his own future safety. While he waited outside the Yamen, nursing his anger and thinking about what should be his next move, a message came from Chang to say that he was not 'at home'. With few dignified choices left to him Campbell chose to be insulted and he withdrew with as much dignity as he was able to muster, maintaining the 'stiff demeanour' in keeping with the occasion. He was subsequently accused by Grey of overreacting, but it is hard to see what else he might have done, given his diplomatic training and Chang's obvious determination to be obstructive.[21]

Campbell next returned to his post at Chumbi village in order to compose himself and await any further developments, which were not slow to present themselves when the Tibetan headman at Chumbi informed him that the villagers had supplied Chang's men with grass for their ponies. The headman explained that he had sanctioned this because Chang was 'a powerful official' whom he was not prepared to disobey, unless the British were willing to protect him from their wrath. Campbell was obliged to concede that he was unable to do this as he had only five men available for police duty at the time, all of whom were occupied elsewhere. The local Tibetan view of the state of play at this point is very revealing since it clearly shows how little influence the British really had in Chumbi, despite the Lhasa Convention and the Chinese adhesion treaty. The situation now began to turn very ugly for Campbell who decided that he must take action to defend British interests, with or without official backing.

His first move was to issue orders preventing Chang's men commandeering British store houses in the area. On the following morning he organised a guard for the stores at the neighbouring town of Phema and then rode on to check the situation in Yatung. Here he discovered that two Tibetan houses, used as grain stores by the British, had been broken into and were currently being occupied by the Chinese servants in Chang's party. He immediately lodged a formal complaint with Henderson, the Chinese customs official for Tibet who was attached to Chang's party. In doing this Campbell expected to get support from Henderson, who was a British citizen, but was this was not to be the case as Henderson was also first and foremost an employee of the Chinese government. To Campbell's dismay, Henderson responded by informing him that the houses in question were legally the property of the Chinese Customs

Service and were only on temporary loan to the British. The Chinese Customs Service was a powerful force in Peking and its leader, Sir Robert Hart, had the ear of the British minister to Peking, as well as, it was rumoured, to the Manchu court, and Campbell wisely decided not to challenge him or engage in further debate over the issue. Their conversation then turned to other matters. Although Campbell later claimed that Henderson had 'apologised' for Chang's 'mistake' at the Pipitang Yamen, he also sensed that he seemed 'weary' of the Chinese and was upset by what he described as Chang's 'impossible ideas'. As a British subject in Chinese employ, Henderson was of course in the unenviable position of being the servant of two masters. On the one hand he had to present the Chinese case to Campbell, which was that Chang had been invited to Tibet by the Lhasa authorities to investigate Tibetan complaints against the British, while on the other he had to placate his fellow countrymen and make excuses for Chang's diplomatic *faux pas*.[22]

Tensions escalated on the following morning in Yatung when Henderson called to see Campbell to lodge a formal complaint from Chang, who claimed that Campbell was preventing supplies of food and fodder from reaching the Yamen at Pipitang. Campbell denied this charge and, feeling that Henderson believed him and in fact 'understood' precisely what was going on, was confident that the matter had been resolved. Later on that afternoon, however, he came upon Henderson standing beside the telegraph pole in Yatung looking 'very worried', having apparently just received a telegraph report that Campbell's men had arrested and mistreated Chinese and Tibetan troops. Chang had also apparently accused Campbell of playing a 'double game' and, although this story turned out to be a gross distortion of the events at Phema, where the so-called 'victims' were Tibetan soldiers out of uniform arrested by mistake following Chinese complaints about their behaviour, there had clearly been overreactions on both sides. To Campbell it seemed as though the situation was careering out of control despite all his best efforts to remain calm and deal with the situation himself.

Encouraged by news that Bell was now en route to Chumbi, on the following day Campbell rode out to meet his superior officer on the road to advise him of the situation and warn him about Chang's unpredictable behaviour. Having received conflicting reports about what was going on from both Campbell and the Chinese, Bell was anxious to investigate the events of the past few days for himself and was particularly concerned about Campbell who appeared to him to be quite confused. Predictably, Chang's attitude immediately changed as soon as he met Bell, who found him charming and co-operative and was apparently convinced by Chang's explanation that the whole incident at the Pipitang Yamen had been a misunderstanding based upon his assumption that Campbell's visit there could not been an official one since he was expecting Bell himself, as the most senior British official in the area, to make the first formal approach.

Chang also made it plain that the Chinese regarded Campbell as a mere junior official and therefore quite unworthy to treat with their high commissioner on equal terms. He then went on accuse the British officer of behaving in a 'strange and unseemly manner' by creating 'embarrassing scenes' outside the Pipitang Yamen in full view of the Tibetans, forcing him on the defensive. Campbell vehemently denied these charges, and was finally able to persuade Bell that Chang had deliberately exploited the situation in order to compromise the British position in Tibet. He was probably able to do this because Bell himself had had previous experience of this kind of deliberate prevarication during the Younghusband expedition, when Chinese and Tibetan officials had insisted on the correct observation of protocol between negotiating parties, a process often involving protracted arguments about the status of the negotiators which had effectively blocked the British invasion for months.[23]

Campbell was eventually able to convince Bell that Chang was lying, but he found Minto a tougher nut to crack and was required to produce a detailed defence of his actions to the Indian government. This small frontier incident encapsulates the precarious position of British agents working inside Tibet after the Younghusband invasion had transformed the situation for men on the spot. After Younghusband's judgement had been criticised in London over the terms of the Lhasa Convention, agents like Campbell could no longer rely upon the automatic support of their superior officer. Furthermore, the considerable confusion over policy produced a general atmosphere of uncertainty, providing ample opportunity for individual manoeuvre on both sides. Chang's desire to establish Chinese sovereignty, and Campbell's need to reinforce British authority, created administrative complications which the Tibetans were often able to exploit to their own advantage in order to preserve their economy and protect their way of life.

Although, in the event, Campbell was strongly supported by Bell and subsequently by Minto, in London, Morley and Grey were far less sympathetic, being more aware of the wider implications that the dispute with Chang had involved. Campbell was therefore ordered to adopt a 'more conciliatory' manner towards his rival, a move which was in itself a humiliating indictment of his conduct and a further warning to other agents forced to use their initiative in similar circumstances.[24]

Having given Campbell a very unpleasant shock at Chumbi Chang moved next to disrupt the life of Frederick O'Connor, the British trade agent at Gyantse. His first appearance at Gyantse coincided with O'Connor's return from leave in November 1906.[25]

Before Chang's arrival O'Connor's deputy, Frederick Bailey, had been coping remarkably well with an awkward situation at the mart where he had come into conflict with Mr Gow, the Chinese agent there. This was his first posting and, during O'Connor's absence, he had been exposed to a series of petty disputes in which Gow had questioned his authority and

apparently exaggerated his own status at Bailey's expense. Far from calming things down, however, O'Connor's return only served to escalate tensions and his initial instinctive reaction, based upon his previous experience with the Chinese during 1904, was to be equally intolerant. He therefore exacerbated the situation by refusing to communicate with Gow until he had formally apologised to Bailey.[26]

As had been the case with Campbell, O'Connor's tone with Gow and his subsequent behaviour at Gyantse were to be strongly condemned in London. Until his return to Gyantse O'Connor had been regarded as one of only a handful of experts on Tibetan affairs. This had been based upon his performance during the British invasion when he had drafted the text of the Lhasa Convention and had acted as Younghusband's right-hand man throughout. Unlike Campbell, however, O'Connor appreciated that there had been a dramatic change of policy since Curzon's departure from India, and he understood that he could not expect the same level of support that he had previously received from India – a fact forcefully confirmed for him during his first leave when, following his letter of June 1906, he had visited Morley at the India Office in London and discovered that his detailed suggestions for future Tibetan policy had been effectively ignored.[27] Despite these warnings, O'Connor did not expect to be asked to give ground to either Gow or Chang, both of whom he saw as officials of lesser rank than himself. As with Campbell, the non-involvement policy enabled the Chinese to exploit O'Connor's vulnerability in a series of incidents in which he proved powerless to defend himself, and which, in the first three months of 1907, threatened open warfare at the Gyantse mart.

After Chang's brief visit to Gyantse in November 1906 Mr Gow seemed to grow in confidence, and in the claustrophobic atmosphere of the mart, where even minor irritations could quickly spiral out of control, O'Connor found himself embroiled in a further series of petty conflicts with him. In the first three months of 1907 the impact of these incidents and the effect they were having on O'Connor himself became obvious in his regular reports to India. Minto could well understand the problem, but British observers in London and Peking were far less sympathetic to his plight and were even embarrassed by what they judged to be his gross overreaction to events.[28] In Peking, Jordan was obliged to deal with Chinese complaints about O'Connor's behaviour at a time when Anglo-Chinese relations were in upheaval, and he felt that the British trade agent was at least partly to blame for causing what he described as a 'storm in a teacup', and he commented wryly to London that it would be some time before trade at the mart could pay the telegraph bill that the friction there had caused. Jordan's opinion was heavily influenced by his close contact with the Chinese Customs Service, and by the damaging reports they received from Henderson, who was still attached to Chang's party inside Tibet. Henderson had his own reasons for supporting Gow over O'Connor, partly based on the fact that he was an employee of the

Chinese government but also due to the result of ongoing tensions between the Chinese Customs Service and the newly created British trade agents, whose duties often overlapped.[29]

By March 1907 there was deadlock at Gyantse, with O'Connor's pleas for London to take direct action against Gow matching in ferocity his opponent's complaints to Peking. Although O'Connor could count on Minto's sympathy, this was of no immediate help to him since he was quite isolated so far inside Tibet. Eventually, protracted discussions between London, India and Peking did lead to Gow's recall in July 1907 – a vindication for O'Connor perhaps, but a triumph short-lived. In the following month he himself was recalled to act as an adviser to the trade regulation talks in Simla in a thinly disguised attempt to remove him from Gyantse, later successfully exploited as a sacking by Chang who argued that Britain had been forced to recall one of their most experienced Tibetan advisers. His view seems to have been borne out by the facts as O'Connor never again worked in Tibet, although he did continue a successful career elsewhere. Gow was amply rewarded for his services in Tibet by promotion to the prestigious post of director of railways at Mukden.[30]

O'Connor was perhaps one of the saddest victims of the Liberal non-involvement policy. He had been placed in an impossible position at Gyantse. For him, as for Campbell, this had been an important career opportunity, and he later became quite bitter about his treatment. Although he did not return to Tibet he did continue a warm correspondence with the Panchen Lama for many years after he left Gyantse, and he was able to keep in contact with events in Tibet from afar, becoming political officer in Sikkim for a brief period.[31]

What Jordan, Grey and Morley had seen as O'Connor's dramatic overreaction at Gyantse had produced quite a different response in India. Minto and Bell had supported him as best they could throughout his ordeal, and his predicament had convinced the India Service of the need to maintain a British presence at the Tibetan trade marts, not only to safeguard the lucrative Indo-Tibetan trade that had been carefully built up there but also as a means of monitoring Chinese encroachments, seen as a positive threat to Indian security as Chinese forward policy continued apace.[32]

It is impossible to discuss events inside Tibet in this period without reference to Charles Bell. As deputy political officer between 1906 and 1908, and later as political officer in Sikkim until 1920, Bell was ultimately responsible for the daily conduct of British administration in Tibet. As a senior official he had enjoyed greater respect from Chang than had Campbell at Chumbi, or O'Connor at Gyantse, but he too experienced pressures of a different kind which were equally taxing in their own way.

Bell had accepted the appointment of acting political officer for Sikkim in April 1906 while Claude White was on an extended official visit to Bhutan. At the age of thirty he was a veteran of the Younghusband expedition and already widely acknowledged as a leading expert on Tibet.[33] Bell

shared Curzon's view that the country could act as a useful buffer against invasion and was a potential source of commercial wealth for India. He adopted a much more enlightened approach to the Tibetans than either White, O'Connor or Bailey, however, and was more sensitive to the complexities of the frontier situation than the majority of his contemporaries. He had acted as a father-protector to Campbell at Chumbi, rushing to his aid during the conflict with Chang in September 1906, and, despite his own suspicions of Chang's motives, he had managed to retain cordial relations with him and avert the disastrous breakdown in Anglo-Chinese relations so feared by the British legation in Peking.[34]

The decision to appoint Bell as White's deputy, and later as his successor, had been a carefully calculated one. Grey had come to regard him as the ideal man for the delicate task of fronting the non-involvement policy, although, with hindsight, he seems an odd choice, given his obvious sympathy with Curzon. This honeymoon period was predictably short-lived and it was not long before Bell fell foul of the British Foreign Office.

In November 1906, only a matter of months after his arrival in Sikkim, and encouraged by his success in averting trouble at Chumbi, Bell decided to organise what he described as 'informal talks' with Chang.[35] In doing this he was displaying a daring initiative and risked drawing the Indian government into an alliance with China which might have long-term consequences for future British involvement in Tibet, and which, at the very least, might serve to create further damaging misunderstandings. Bell was confident that in setting up this dialogue he had made it clear to Chang that there was no possibility of any formal outcome to their conversations, and felt able to proceed without misgivings. Chang accepted his invitation with alacrity and when the two men finally met they discussed a range of sensitive issues relating to the trade marts at Yatung and Gyantse. Bell's idea had been to try to tie up the minor disputes that generated so much tension at the marts and so protect British interests there. However, in going ahead with these unauthorised talks he had failed to consult either the British trade agents or any of the Tibetan officials at the marts. What was more, during the course of the conversation Chang raised the possibility of handing over Indian property to China, a dangerous precedent to set, especially in view of Chinese forward policy and Chang's obvious anxiety to turn the situation to his own advantage.[36]

On hearing about the talks Minto was clearly irritated by the fact that, although Bell had claimed to have made it clear to Chang that the talks were unofficial, Chang had declared himself empowered to make decisions without reference to Peking and even seemed willing to formalise arrangements on the spot. Grey was also disappointed, and observed to India that Chang had clearly outwitted Bell by acting as senior partner throughout.[37] Beyond this apparent blow to British prestige, however, it was hard to see what real harm had been done. Bell himself was pleased with the outcome of the discussions and was quite upset by

what he regarded as this unwarranted attack on his performance. He reacted to this official criticism by lending further support to O'Connor in his bid to oust Gow from Gyantse, and by campaigning for an increase in the size of the military escort there. For a while Morley and Minto were at daggers drawn over the issue, which intensified after the withdrawal of British troops from Chumbi in February 1908, by which time Minto's pleas to increase the size of the escorts became impossible for Morley to resist.[38]

Despite his alarming tendency to act independently, Bell's approach invariably received Minto's tacit support, this being most apparent in matters involving the Panchen Lama. Like others in the India Service Bell believed that Chang's main aim was to isolate the Panchen Lama by weakening his ties with India and also with the Dalai Lama, a process made easier by the Panchen Lama's visit to India in 1905 and by the lack of coherent government in Lhasa.[39] The Dalai Lama was still much distrusted in India and the plan to present the Panchen Lama as an alternative ruler, which O'Connor and White had tried to implement in 1905 without success, had been a real attempt to remove him altogether from the political scene. For his own part the Panchen Lama had been seriously compromised by British actions and by 1905 still lived in fear of reprisals from both Peking and Lhasa. Despite this he remained anxious to retain the friendship of India and, to this end, he issued open-ended invitations to British officials to visit him at Shigatse. Morley's ban on frontier travel naturally precluded such personal visits, but Bell's persistence in asking to be permitted to see the Panchen Lama eventually paid off and Minto agreed to promote the visit to Morley as a special case.[40] It has been suggested that Minto did this because he felt partly responsible for the Panchen Lama's plight; however, his support for Bell was also very typical of his general response to initiatives from his frontier officers. He had, for example, previously lent his weight to British agents' demands for action against Tibetan infringements of the Lhasa Convention, even though by doing so he had been drawn into further conflict with Morley, who tended to interpret any frontier initiative as an automatic threat to the non-involvement policy.[41]

Bell's argument for visiting Shigatse was based upon the fact that British employees of the Chinese Customs Service like Henderson were allowed to travel freely inside Tibet, whereas Indian employees like himself, also travelling on official business, did not enjoy reciprocal privileges. According to Bell this constituted a serious loss of face for India, and it was this that convinced Morley to relax the ban on travel, allowing Bell to visit the Panchen Lama twice in late 1906. Although on both occasions their conversations concentrated on the Panchen Lama's obsessive fear of Chinese reprisals, Bell was able to establish a meaningful dialogue with him and managed also to convince his many Tibetan supporters that India intended only friendship with Tibet. This minor diplomatic coup more than compensated for his bad showing with Chang at Chumbi and

allowed him to retain and develop his contact in Tibet where others had failed.[42]

Bell's contribution to Tibetan policy was a very positive one. His knowledge of Tibetan language and culture, together with his powerful position as political officer in Sikkim until 1920, enabled him to move quickly and effectively to defuse much of the tension with the Chinese at the marts. Unlike Campbell and O'Connor, who both became quite depressed and confused by the constant pressure, Bell's enhanced status meant that he was able to be more dispassionate, and this helped him to maintain cordial relations with the mercurial Chang, who saw him as an equal. With Minto's support he was able to survive criticism from Grey and Morley without any cost to his career and, despite the fact that he remained Curzonian in outlook, he managed to retain his position as the leading Tibetan expert to a much greater extent than any of his colleagues, including Younghusband. This was partly because he was on the frontier for so long, but was also due to the fact that, unlike many of his contemporaries, he was prepared to cultivate leading Tibetans, including the Dalai Lama, with whom he was to enjoy a long and profitable friendship.[43]

Between 1905 and 1908 the Lhasa authorities fought hard to counter British and Chinese attempts to interfere with their trading patterns. Although some Tibetans managed to profit from the disruption generated by the Younghusband invasion and its immediate aftermath by providing food and transport for the foreign invaders, others, like the *torowas* and *jongpons* of the Chumbi valley, suffered as they found that their monopoly rights were compromised by the terms of the Lhasa Convention.[44]

In May 1905 Claude White, as political officer in Sikkim, investigated numerous complaints about the aggressive behaviour of the *jongpons* at the important trading centre of Phari who, in defiance of the Lhasa Convention, were imposing heavy taxes on Indian trade passing through the town.[45] Younghusband had earlier experienced great problems with these men, who proved dangerous when crossed, and so, in the interests of non-involvement, Grey decided it was best to disturb Tibetan monopoly holders as little as possible, even if this had a damaging effect on Indian commerce. Rather surprisingly perhaps, this approach was also adopted by the Indian government. During his interview with Chang in June 1906, for example, Dane deliberately played down the problems between British and Tibetan officials at Gartok in an effort to persuade the Chinese that the Lhasa Convention was working.[46]

Despite British attempts to defuse the situation by turning a blind eye, however, the problem persisted, and by 1908 Minto was receiving regular reports of continuing obstruction despite this flexible approach. The main problem involved in any attempt to tackle this from the British point of view was twofold. Firstly, disputes at the marts were aggravated by the Chinese who had no wish to encourage the development of Indian trade,

which could only be a threat to their own. Secondly, there was no appeal to anyone outside the immediate area, since Tibetan traders had their own quarrels with the Lhasa authorities, as Younghusband had discovered when he had tried to make contact with the Dalai Lama in 1903.[47] The attitude adopted by Tibetan traders is not hard to understand, of course, since trade was life in Tibet and the vast majority of people who were not monks made their living as traders of one sort or another. The new marts at Yatung and Gyantse were not sited on key trading routes and tensions were easily generated when goods travelling on routes not passing through these marts escaped the scrutiny of British officials. The Politicals well appreciated this fact, and for this reason they pressed for the relocation of the marts at every available opportunity.[48]

One of the major problems affecting the smooth running of the marts from the British point of view was the fear of the Chinese that many Tibetans felt. Even before the British arrived in Tibet there had been a long history of conflict over trade in the Chumbi valley, where Chinese, Bhutanese and Nepalese were all trading rivals. Bell's reports to India are full of references to 'alarming rumours' in the Chumbi bazaars about imminent Chinese invasions of Lhasa. The situation worsened after 1906 when the Chinese began to circulate ethnic newspapers in which they promoted themselves as powerful rulers in a virulent anti-British campaign as part of their forward policy, also issuing threats of reprisals against any Tibetans who helped the British in any way. Some reports even alleged that Chang had arranged for the Tibetan leaders at Gartok to assemble the local people together in order to 'threaten' them into making false allegations against British trade agents.[49]

In addition to overt Chinese opposition to British control at the trade marts there was genuine confusion on all sides about the levying of rights and duties, as well as genuine misunderstandings about the privileges gained by China under the 1906 adhesion treaty. Soon after O'Connor returned to Gyantse in late 1906, for example, Henderson had told him that Chang believed that the adhesion treaty had restored all China's suzerain rights in Tibet, an idea that had also formed the subject of many debates between Bell and Chang at Chumbi during this period.[50] Tibetans were understandably angry and confused about the content of the Lhasa Convention and the adhesion treaty that followed, and the traders of Chumbi and Gyantse explained many times to Campbell and O'Connor that they felt it was in their best interests to placate both sides for fear of offending either. Those Tibetans who had prospered as a result of the British presence in the Chumbi valley did not hesitate to exploit the situation at every available opportunity, but generally the Tibetan traders had much to fear – especially from the Chinese, who made it clear that they were prepared to take punitive action against a people whom they regarded as greatly inferior to themselves. Chinese and Tibetan officials at Lhasa had already been punished for helping the British, and for the

Tibetan people the message was quite clear: China regarded the British as an enemy presence in Tibet which they were expected to resist if they wanted to preserve their traditional way of life.

At first the Tibetans had ignored the Lhasa Convention in their dealings with the British, just as they had ignored previous treaties with them. To a large extent Tibetan culture and lifestyle were dictated by climate, terrain and religion rather than by political events, and even foreign invasions did not tend to disrupt the pattern of trade too much. However, although they often quibbled over aspects of the Lhasa Convention, the Lhasa authorities were well aware of its implications. As the case of Shadi La illustrates, the *garphons* at Gartok knew that Indian traders were not permitted to travel beyond the trade marts and further into Tibet, and when they received British complaints about Tibetan infringements of the Lhasa Convention they were quick to point out that the British also had obligations of their own to fulfil.[51]

Many Tibetans were completely unaffected by the new regulations and were for the most part able to tolerate British and Chinese officialdom because their posts were located far away from any traditional trading centres, much as they had always been able to tolerate the token Chinese garrisons located along their frontier with East Tibet where Chinese soldiers, erratically paid and isolated from their peers, had frequently become Tibetanised.[52] For most the need to survive the harsh frontier climate overrode all other considerations, and as winter blocked the passes into Tibet for months at a time all trade ceased and any foreign presence seemed irrelevant.

After Younghusband, the British occupation of the Chumbi valley and the emergence of the new more powerful breed of Chinese official, typified by Chang Yin-tang and Mr Gow, had made some impact on the political life of Tibet, but this was mainly due to the fact that the Dalai Lama was too far away from Lhasa to act as a focus for the conduct of Tibetan affairs. Events in East Tibet and the reappearance of the Dalai Lama as a political force in Tibetan politics would soon transform the situation, however, bringing major changes in Tibet's relations with Britain.

4 Delicate work

The Dalai Lama, the China Service and East Tibet, 1904–1909

> We all attended one of the Dalai Lama's 'at homes', and were not particularly impressed with his intelligence.
>
> Sir John Jordan on the Dalai Lama, October 1908

East Tibet was bordered by the Chinese provinces of Sichuan and Yunnan and was entirely different in character to that of Tibet's frontier with India, being subject to greater Chinese influence and control. Its people belonged to a variety of different tribal groupings, some of whom were not Tibetan. Although there were huge monasteries and sizeable towns, like Chamdo, Batang and Ta-chien-liu, most of East Tibet was sparsely populated by nomadic or semi-nomadic herders and traders, as well as by bandits who haunted the trade routes, making any travel hazardous. From the 1880s onwards some British commercial companies had made efforts to investigate the trading potential of the area, drawn by rumours of vast underworked gold and mineral deposits on Sichuan's borders with Tibet. Scientific interest in the cultural life and language of the various tribes living in East Tibet had also led to expeditions of exploration, and there had been numerous attempts to persuade them to trade. There had also been a number of schemes launched to link Tibet with south-west China, using steamboats on the upper reaches of the Yangtse river and a rail link from Burma, both of which had been spectacularly unsuccessful.[1]

East Tibet was generally regarded by men of the India Service as quite separate from the rest of the country, primarily because this eastern frontier was staffed by men of the China Consular Service and there was little direct communication between them. The China Service was administered from London by the Far Eastern Department of the Foreign Office which supervised the British legation in Peking as well as liaising with the Chinese legation in London. The consular section of the Service was run by a separate consular department but, inside China itself, the British minister in Peking was directly responsible for the officers in his care. The Far Eastern Department had always enjoyed comparative freedom within the Foreign Office, partly because it dealt with an area far from Europe in

which British interests had been traditionally commercial, and partly because it was administered by a successful and efficient team.

In 1904 the senior clerk at the Far Eastern Department was Francis Campbell, a man of great experience and ability who had served under Salisbury and was one of the team who had helped to steer the Department through the Boxer Crisis in 1900.[2] As foreign secretary after 1905 Grey took a particular interest in the Department, mainly because of his concern to safeguard the Anglo-Japanese Alliance, with its many implications for Britain's commercial and naval security both inside China and in the Pacific and Indian Oceans, but also because he considered the preservation of good Anglo-Chinese relations to be an essential element in keeping the Tibetan situation stable. The remoteness of China and Grey's protection were thus twin factors in ensuring the continuing independence of the Far Eastern Department and the China Service in the run up to the First World War when Foreign Office time became largely occupied with the developing crisis in Europe.[3]

The Far Eastern Department was also fortunate in enjoying an excellent working relationship with successive British ministers to Peking, who relied on Campbell's friendly weekly letters as a life line to the world outside China. When he died suddenly of a kidney infection in December 1911, continuity was maintained when Walter Langley, his assistant, took over. Langley was able to slip into his new role with comparative ease, having the advantage of being already well known to the British minister John Jordan, this being one of the few benefits of a system that promoted by seniority rather than by merit.[4]

The British legation in Peking was part of a much larger complex of legations that occupied nearly one-quarter of the city. It had survived the Boxer Rebellion in 1900 with little structural damage, but the psychological trauma had lingered long after the event and, by 1904, the legation had tended to turn in on itself, creating a small oasis of Englishness in what many now felt to be the increasingly unstable and hostile environment beyond its walls.[5] The British minister to Peking dominated the life of the legation and, unlike the rest of his staff, was a member of the elite Diplomatic Service. He lived rather grandly in a green-tiled Chinese palace known as the Tinghri, rented from a Chinese prince. His three secretaries each occupied their own detached bungalows in the compound and the remaining staff, consisting of a vice-consul, fifteen student interpreters and a marine guard, all shared a mess in each of three large outbuildings. The post of Chinese secretary was the most important and prestigious career post after that of British minister since it demanded great competence in both written and spoken Chinese. Most of the legation's daily correspondence was in his hands, and it was also his duty to organise and care for the student interpreters.[6] The British minister's work was primarily diplomatic, and much of his day was spent interviewing and consulting with the Chinese Foreign Office or Wai Wu Pu as well as with other legation heads.[7]

Between 1901 and 1920 two men held the post of British minister to Peking, both of whom had broken with previous tradition by transferring into the Diplomatic Corps from the less prestigious Consular Department. What made this particularly impressive was that neither men came from a wealthy or aristocratic background. Transfers of this kind were unusual and are in themselves an indication that, in China, commercial considerations predominated and experience and expertise in matters of trade and business were often as highly valued as status or family connections. Despite frequent requests from legation heads in the past the British minister to Peking had never been elevated in rank to that of ambassador and the legation never given embassy status.[8]

Sir Ernest Satow, British minister between 1901 and 1906, was a skilled linguist and an intellectual who had already enjoyed a distinguished career in Japan before coming to China. His ability to cultivate Japanese diplomats had proved a great benefit to the British government in establishing early contact with Japan and he had played a formative role in the negotiations for the Boxer Protocol of 1901. While in Japan he had flouted social and political convention by openly taking a Japanese common-law wife and had educated their two sons in the western tradition. Although he had been persuaded to leave his Japanese family behind to come to China, this youthful indiscretion had blighted any chances of further promotion, and when he left China in 1906 it was to go into reluctant retirement in England where he continued to advise the Foreign Office on Chinese affairs from time to time.[9]

His successor, Sir John Jordan, British minister until 1920, was also an unconventional choice. An Ulsterman from a farming background, Jordan was a brilliant linguist with a Double First in Classics from Belfast. Before becoming British minister to Peking he had previously served as assistant secretary to the Peking legation and had been consul-general in Seoul between 1896 and 1906, during which time the brutal Japanese takeover of Korea made a lasting impression upon him and led to difficulties with the Japanese diplomats in later years. Unlike Satow, Jordan brought his family with him to Peking, where his wife, Anne, was able to provide much-needed domesticity to the otherwise male-dominated legation.[10]

Having been promoted from within the Consular Service both Satow and Jordan were more sensitive than many of their predecessors to the strengths and weaknesses of the China Service. Jordan in particular was deeply concerned about the situation experienced by men in the field and became a great champion of centralisation, believing that operating consulates in remote areas like those bordering East Tibet was a waste of manpower and resources, and for this reason he came to regard Tibet as a particular nuisance.[11]

The men recruited to work on the borders of Tibet came from the ranks of the student interpreters. These men were chosen to serve

two-year apprenticeships at the British legation in Peking before being sent out into the field as consuls. Candidates for the China Service tended to be drawn from a much wider social background than those selected for similar positions in the India Service, which was dominated by public school entrants. Although the Consular Service was considered less prestigious there was intense competition for the places, despite the obvious drawbacks of this type of posting. It was a bitter standing joke within the China Service itself, for example, that out of every four recruits chosen, one went mad, one became an alcoholic, one died, and only one survived for long enough to receive promotion.[12]

Until Ta-chien-lu was opened in 1913 three posts served as bases from which events in Tibet were monitored by British consuls. Two of these posts were situated near the Burma border at Tengyueh and Yunnanfu in the Chinese province of Yunnan. The third post at Chengdu was in Chinese Sichuan and had originally been selected as a consular post by the French, Britain's leading competitors in this part of Asia before 1904. Sichuan was one of the remotest yet wealthiest of all the provinces in the loosely governed Chinese Empire, and the French had hoped to use Chengdu as a way of gaining better access to the viceroy of Sichuan, a powerful and semi-independent ruler in his own right. In the event the British were the first to open a consulate in the city in 1902, with Alexander Hosie as their first consul-general. The Chinese had not liked the idea of foreign consulates opening outside treaty ports and had barely tolerated Hosie as consul-general in Chungking; his presence in Chengdu was permitted only on the basis that he would continue to operate officially from Chungking. In 1903, the French were allowed to open a consulate in Chengdu under a similar arrangement. By 1904 Chengdu was the main observation post for Tibet, becoming increasingly important as Chinese forward policy developed between 1904 and 1909.[13]

Compared to the unhealthy rat-infested city of Chungking, which was built on a promontory overlooking the busy Yangtse river, Chengdu was a paradise. Cosmopolitan and sophisticated, it was the capital of Sichuan and noted for its sweet-smelling hibiscus plants and its wide, spacious streets. In contrast to many of the public buildings in Chengdu, however, the British consulate was a run-down hovel about which many of its incumbents complained, and a posting to the city was not accepted lightly. The journey there had to be undertaken by river, and consuls were often unwilling to subject their families to the dangers involved in travelling beyond Chungking where the Yangtse became wild and unpredictable. C.W. Campbell and H. Goffe, who both held posts in Chengdu between 1904 and 1907, each left their wives behind and consequently endured a lonely time. Goffe's successor, H. Fox, did bring his wife to the dilapidated consulate in 1908 but begged to leave soon after ill health had forced her to return within weeks of their arrival. When B. Twyman, a widower, took

over the post in 1909 he too found the loneliness unbearable and was also forced to return to England within a year after suffering a nervous breakdown, brought on by the harsh conditions.[14]

While travelling in East Tibet during 1904 Alexander Hosie had taken note of the tense situation that had developed following the news of Younghusband's arrival in Lhasa and the disturbing effect the British invasion force had had upon the East Tibetan borderlands.[15] The area was dominated by the great monasteries of the Red Hat sect who for many years had resisted all attempts by the Chinese to increase their political influence in the area. Tensions escalated in the following year when the Chinese *amban* Feng was murdered, allegedly by Tibetans, and from that time, until the Chinese eventually invaded Lhasa in February 1910, East Tibet was affected by the policies of the provincial government of Sichuan and by the activities of Chao Erh Feng, commander of the Chinese forces in East Tibet.

Chao had been personally appointed by the Sichuan viceroy, Hsi-Liang, in 1905 and ordered to undertake a 'pacification of the Tibetan marches'. Under the Chinese system the Sichuan government were responsible for the maintenance of frontier stability on this part of the Sino-Tibetan border, but Chao's appointment had only been reluctantly sanctioned by Peking after Feng's murder. The emperor's official sanction and Hsi-Liang's support meant that Chao was able to issue a powerful challenge to the Lama rulers of East Tibet.[16]

At first Chao had basked in the approval of those missionaries in the area who welcomed this development as an aid to their missionary work, which they believed had been hampered over the years by opposition from the hostile abbots of East Tibet. This view was not shared by J.H. Edgar of the China Inland Mission at Batang. In a lengthy report commissioned by Jordan in 1906, he described the situation in East Tibet following Chao's arrival in very different terms. As a man with many years' experience of this frontier Edgar was extremely sceptical about the pacification programme which Chao was to implement, and in his report he emphasised the foolhardiness of the venture. Edgar well understood that it was the local population who had resisted his Christian message and he found it incredible that Chao might expect to operate in an area so lonely and barren where he himself had found the local people 'wild and unruly' and given over to 'chronic bickering'.[17]

Jordan was also kept aware of the possible implications of Chao's venture in regular updated reports from the British consul-general at Chengdu. In February 1906, for example, Goffe had reported a conversation he had had with Chao on the subject of the latter's plan to build a railway across East Tibet to India. Alarming as this was it had been immediately obvious to Goffe that this was a mistimed and an ill-considered scheme that had not gone beyond provincial government level and had certainly failed to gain approval from Peking. Edicts and memoranda

issued by Peking at the time and studied by Suchita Ghosh have confirmed that the Wai Wu Pu were less than enthusiastic about the programme of colonisation which the Sichuan viceroy was promoting and which sought to involve them in an ambitious plan to 'de-Tibetanise' the frontier by importing landless Chinese labourers to grow crops there.[18]

In Jordan's estimation the threat which Chao posed was not sufficiently serious to alert London, and he tended to discount it in these early stages as simply a continuation of the sort of conflicts historically indigenous to East Tibet.[19] Whatever reservations Jordan or Peking might have had about the viability of Chao's forward policy, however, his forceful personality and the myths which began to surround him soon made a huge impact on the East Tibetan frontier. Within five years he had created an army of some 6,000 veterans which, as Alastair Lamb has observed, would bring China even greater power in East Tibet than ever before.[20]

Chao's military campaign began in January 1906 with an attack on the East Tibetan monastery of Sanpiling in the District of Hsian Ch'eng, a stronghold of Lama opposition. After a lengthy siege lasting six months the great monastery fell, and Chao allowed over 2,000 of its monks to be murdered and the building destroyed.[21] This spectacular victory gave him a great psychological advantage, enabling him to begin to implement the first of many reforms aimed at the modernisation of the area. Although the monks tended to be strongly anti-Chinese many ordinary Tibetans had been indifferent to Chinese influence and were now more than happy to reap the benefits of Chao's reforms, which often meant that they received the benefit of free education and medical care for the first time, as well as enjoying Chinese protection from the abbots and tribal chieftains whose control over their lives they had often resented.[22]

From the Chinese point of view Chao's greatest achievements were military ones and his most spectacular successes were the subjugation of the Tibetan states of Derge and Nyarong which had previously been under Chinese control and where they believed the local population had been most oppressed by the Lhasa authorities. Derge was the wealthiest and largest of the Tibetan-controlled states and its occupation by China caused trepidation in Lhasa. Chao's forces had entered in 1908 on the pretext of settling a domestic dispute between members of its ruling family and, by the end of that year, he seemed poised to take the neighbouring states of Nyarong and Chamdo, the latter a strategic area controlling the main road to Lhasa and a further indication to the Lhasa authorities that his ultimate goal was to be the invasion of Lhasa itself.[23]

British attitudes towards East Tibet were not as well formed as those towards other parts of the country. Jordan's China Service were less interested in this area, which had historically been a region where the Chinese came and went. They were therefore inclined to accept Chao's invasion force as a temporary phenomenon before 1909, and although they documented his progress as best they could their main concern lay in locating

and monitoring the movements of the Dalai Lama who was by now progressing across this remote frontier region like a medieval monarch with his vast retinue of followers.[24]

Between 1904 and his arrival in Peking in September 1908 the Tibetan ruler had been on official retreat. During this time he had enjoyed a lengthy stay in Mongolia as the guest of the Mongolian Church in Urga (Ulan Bator), where he had received various Russian dignitaries, including the celebrated Russian explorer Pytor Kozlov with whom he was rumoured to have discussed his future plans and prospects.[25] From the time of his disappearance, following Younghusband's arrival in Lhasa in 1904, until his reappearance in Kansu in 1908, the Dalai Lama had created special problems for Britain and China as well as for his own government in Lhasa which, in his absence, had struggled to keep the disparate factions inside Tibet together.

Official Chinese attitudes towards the Dalai Lama between 1904 and 1908 may be traced in a document probably written by the Chinese president Yuan Shih Kai in 1912, shortly after the revolution which toppled the Manchu dynasty had taken place.[26] Although obviously a biased account of what had happened, it is nevertheless very revealing since Yuan was a member of the Wai Wu Pu at the time and would have been in close touch with events.

In his report he described the way in which the Dalai Lama's 'march across Chinese territory' had caused great anxiety in Peking. Firstly, because he travelled with a huge retinue of devoted followers whom Yuan felt had 'preyed on the country like a swarm of locusts', and proving a great drain on the resources of those chosen as hosts for his extensive and often unsolicited visits. Secondly, because Peking feared his charismatic appeal to the local population who generally regarded him 'with veneration and awe' and who were therefore inclined to treat him with 'great clemency', a particular problem in circumstances where the weakening Manchu authorities were themselves uncertain of how much real control they could exercise so far from the capital in the event of any political disturbances resulting from his presence.[27] Finally, Yuan blamed the Dalai Lama personally for the violent and embarrassing disturbances in East Tibet which had resulted in Feng's murder and the deaths of a number of French missionaries and Catholic priests during 1905 for which costly reparations had had to be paid to the French government. Moreover, his alleged 'intriguing' with Dorjiev was held to be directly responsible for the despatch of the Younghusband expedition in 1904 which had necessitated the payment of the huge indemnity on Tibet's behalf. Chinese annoyance at having to pay for what they considered to be the Dalai Lama's 'misdeeds' was, however, tempered by the greater satisfaction of knowing that their claim on Tibet now had greater moral and legal force, a portent of what was to come when the Chinese finally summoned the Tibetan leader to Peking in 1908.[28]

For Britain the Dalai Lama presented a quite different set of problems. Jordan and Grey tended to regard him as an irrelevant nuisance and were alarmed by his behaviour, which had upset both the Chinese and Indian governments and which, in 1908, continued to threaten the stability of Anglo-Chinese relations, their major priority.[29] From February 1905 the Tibetan government had also expressed great concern for his safety and had made it clear that they wanted him to return to Tibet. The Dalai Lama himself seemed determined to complete what he described as his 'Tour of the holy places of Asia' and was obviously using this as a means of courting foreign representatives and enlisting sympathy for the Tibetan cause. As he was willing to see almost anybody, including journalists, and was quite unable to determine which of the westerners he received were empowered to treat with him, many diplomats feared that he might unwittingly give out sensitive information to whoever happened to gain an audience with him. Jordan in particular was keen to ensure that this behaviour did not jeopardise the final completion of the 1908 trade regulation talks, and he therefore resolved to have as little to do with him as possible.[30]

Despite these concerns the situation had seemed more or less under control when a further problem emerged in the form of a personal edict from the Chinese emperor summoning the Dalai Lama to Peking. There had previously been rumours that the Chinese were going to do this before 1908, but Jordan had been unable to obtain any accurate information about their possible motives, either from his contacts in the Wai Wu Pu or from anyone involved with the Dalai Lama. Reports from the frontier were taking six to eight weeks to reach the British legation, and events now moved so quickly that information was often reported in the press before it reached Peking, as many journalists had already attached themselves to the Dalai Lama's party in the hope of getting a good story.[31] At this stage no one really knew whether the Dalai Lama intended to obey the summons. Various unsubstantiated reports that he was going to return to Lhasa in response to pleas from leading members of the Lhasa government were soon discounted since by this time it was well known that the presence of Chao's armies in East Tibet made his return unsafe without Chinese permission. The Dalai Lama himself must also have realised by now that he was unlikely to get backing from any of the foreign powers he had approached who, though friendly, were, like Jordan, unwilling to get involved.[32]

The Wai Wu Pu had officially informed Jordan in May 1908 that the 'possibility' of the Dalai Lama returning to Tibet was 'under consideration', and in August 1908 British sympathy for his plight had gone as far as allowing Jordan to issue a statement saying that his government 'did not desire to prevent the Dalai Lama returning to Tibet'. However, this had only been issued following a private mutual arrangement with the Russians not to intervene if he approached either side for help.[33] Unable to get active support from any quarter the Tibetan ruler was forced to obey

the emperor's summons and completed the final part of his journey to Peking by train with his huge retinue of followers, quite uncertain of what awaited him. His arrival in Peking marked the ending of the first phase of Chinese forward policy in Tibet. From the moment he was carried from his train in September 1908 he became a virtual prisoner of the Chinese who were set on using him as a pawn in their plan to invade Lhasa and establish Chinese sovereignty over Tibet.

Jordan was among the many foreign representatives of the diplomatic community invited to greet the Dalai Lama at Peking railway station on the morning of 30 September 1908. He observed that though the Chinese had tried to ensure that their guest was treated with the same degree of courtesy and respect shown to his previous incarnation, the Great Fifth, who had visited the city in 1653, the official reception in the crowded confines of the railway station was necessarily perfunctory. The British minister might have been more impressed had he been allowed to accompany the great state procession which carried the Dalai Lama to the Yellow Temple, specially built for the Great Fifth just outside Peking's north gate, although within days of the Dalai Lama's arrival it became obvious to most foreign diplomats that the Chinese did not intend to treat their guest as the ruler of an independent country.[34] The foreign legations were soon aware of disputes about etiquette, but the subtleties of the *chö-yön* which had brought the Dalai Lama to Peking at the personal invitation of the Chinese emperor were unknown to them and, as the days passed, Jordan in particular gained the distinct impression that the Dalai Lama was to be nothing more than a puppet in Chinese hands.[35]

Outwardly the Chinese appeared to go to great lengths to please their guest, but tensions quickly deepened when they realised that the Tibetan ruler was neither overawed nor intimidated by the grandeur of the Manchu court. Within days of his arrival they were forced to take steps to put him firmly in his place and, more importantly, to inform the rest of the world about the status of Tibet as they saw it. Five days after the Dalai Lama's first audience with the emperor, the Wai Wu Pu circulated a note to all foreign legations in Peking giving precise instructions about the nature of all future contact with him and his party. Jordan saw this very obvious attempt to reduce the Dalai Lama's contact with foreign governments as a rather clumsy move, for it seemed to him that nothing could possibly be gained by antagonising someone who was already powerless. In adopting this perspective, however, he revealed his own ignorance of the situation, and his failure to appreciate fully the depths of Chinese anxiety about Tibet, and their need to convince the international community that the country was an integral part of the Chinese Empire, played no small part in further undermining the Dalai Lama's position.[36]

Unaware of the true motives behind the note from the Wai Wu Pu, therefore, the foreign legations allowed it to go unchallenged and agreed to its terms and conditions without fully understanding the implications

this would have for Tibetans. Furthermore, their apparent lack of concern about the situation gave the Chinese sufficient confidence to issue an imperial decree redefining the status of the Dalai Lama which, by the simple addition of four characters to his official Chinese title, awarded the Peking government full sovereignty over Tibet. The November decree not only deprived the Tibetan ruler of his temporal powers but even placed him in an inferior constitutional position to that of the Lhasa *amban* by taking away his right to memorialise the imperial throne directly. From now on he would have to request permission to speak to the emperor, using the Lhasa *amban* as a messenger and so ending the personal nature of the *chö-yön* which had treated the Dalai Lama and the Manchu emperor as equals. This was a grave and unacceptable insult, but all his attempts to have the decision reversed were rejected, as were his repeated requests that a Tibetan delegation might be left in Peking to retain direct access to the court when he returned to Lhasa. A final blow came when it was then announced that the provincial government of Sichuan were to provide the Dalai Lama with a small annual increment, in effect making him virtually an employee of the Chinese government.[37]

With the situation unresolved by the Dalai Lama's refusal to accept the terms of the November decree, the Tibetan party left Peking by train on 21 December having agreed a route to Kumbum monastery in Kansu where they would await Chinese permission to return to Lhasa. Although the Chinese were very wary of treating their guest with anything other than the utmost respect at the start of his visit they had become much bolder in their dealings with him once they had discovered that, though the world's press were in sympathy with the Tibetan cause, foreign governments were unwilling to become politically involved with the sensitive issue of Tibet's status. Jordan had been particularly disinclined to help for fear of disturbing treaty undertakings with Russia and China and had been careful to avoid meeting the Tibetan leader, except as part of the diplomatic crowd and only once at a brief formal interview lasting barely eight minutes. Unlike many of his contemporaries the British minister had been distinctly unimpressed by the Tibetan ruler, describing him as 'delicate work' and as a positive obstacle to good Anglo-Chinese relations, convincing the Tibetans in his party that they could expect no help from London.[38]

Despite all his setbacks during this time the Dalai Lama had begun to receive help from an entirely unexpected source. Frederick O'Connor was in Peking at the time of his stay in his capacity as official escort to the Mahraj Kumar of Sikkim who was visiting China as part of his world tour. After an informal visit to the Yellow Temple, and exploiting Kumar's desire to see him as a cover, O'Connor managed to convince the Dalai Lama that the Indian government were now sympathetic to his situation and might even be willing to help him. This knowledge, together with the lack of support from any other quarter, transformed the nature of the

relationship between India and the Dalai Lama, which had previously been so damaging to both parties. No doubt he kept O'Connor's words in mind when he eventually returned to Lhasa in December 1909, six months later than planned and having completely abandoned the carefully organised itinerary set by the Chinese.[39]

The Dalai Lama had used the breathing space afforded by his delayed return to Lhasa in order to collect as much information as possible about Chinese movements inside Tibet and to try to regain the sympathy and support of Russia.[40] The information he gained could scarcely have afforded him any comfort, however, for Chao Erh Feng had by now extended his range of activity substantially, using his occupation of Derge in 1908 as a precedent for the invasion of other parts of Tibet. Between March and June 1909 his armies took control of vast areas of East Tibet, including the East Tibetan states of Chamdo, Chaya and Markham. By now he had resigned his post as border commissioner to give himself the freedom to concentrate on the military aspects of his campaign. In taking this course he had deliberately cut himself away from the main body of his troops poised to take Lhasa, revealing the true aim of the campaign which planned to enlarge the Chinese Empire by creating the new Chinese province of Sikang, which was set to swallow up the whole of East Tibet. The three crack battalions of the Chinese army that eventually entered Lhasa on 12 February 1910 were therefore not led by Chao himself but by his ambitious young deputy, General Chung Ying, a man who would play a major role in the dramatic events that followed.[41]

Much was to happen inside Lhasa itself before Chinese troops entered the city. During the Dalai Lama's long absence key members of the interim government in Lhasa had begun to adopt a very pro-Indian stance and were worried by their ruler's attempts to court the Russians because they feared it might endanger their lucrative dealings with India. Rulers of the surrounding Himalayan states of Nepal, Sikkim and Bhutan now found themselves once again drawn into Tibetan affairs as the Tibetans and the Indian government were equally keen to employ their services as advisers and mediators in this new crisis of policy. This arrangement did not always sit easily with these states, who had problems of their own to sort out with China and India and who were only too aware that India had expansionist policies of her own in the Himalayas. The obvious way out of this sticky situation was for them to play a double game by befriending both sides, as they had done in the past, as the best investment for their own future. A further complication was also created by the support for the Chinese which was concentrated in the powerful Lhasa monastery of Drepung. The ongoing friction about this predated Younghusband, and even when the Dalai Lama had been living in Lhasa it had been hard to keep the situation under control.[42]

In view of all these conflicting factors it is not hard to appreciate why the immediate relief that greeted the Dalai Lama's return to Lhasa at the

end of 1909 was relatively short-lived for he soon made it clear to the Lhasa authorities that his aim was to resist the Chinese at all costs. Confident of Russian support, he then seized the initiative by launching a vitriolic attack on the Lhasa *amban*, Lien Yu, within a few days of his return, accusing him of plotting against the Tibetan people by deliberately refusing to pass on messages to the Manchu court which had questioned the legality of the November decree.[43]

His actions were an indication of his political astuteness and were designed to show his own people that he was once again in control in Lhasa, as well as demonstrating to the Chinese that he would not accept their ruling as final. By showing the western powers – whose attitudes he had come to know well over the months in China – that he believed Chinese actions to be illegal, the Dalai Lama revealed that he was now prepared to talk to the west in a language which they could understand, and he now began the long battle to establish Tibet's legal right to independence by appealing to international law.

In India the illegality of Chinese actions was confirmed by what they perceived to be Lien Yu's rather hysterical overreaction to the situation, graphically recorded in lengthy reports from Charles Bell and his agents at the Tibetan trade marts.[44] The nature of the Tibetan's coded appeals for help, which often appeared touchingly childlike to western ears, strengthened sympathy for their cause in India. Although Minto was always guarded in his support, the tide had turned and, in complete contrast to their previous attitude, the Dalai Lama now became established as a victim of Chinese aggression as well as an object of desire for the Indian government.[45]

Even in London it was impossible to ignore the humanitarian issue as Tibet struggled against apparently overwhelming odds, but the problem for the British was how to approach the Chinese without offending them. Minto was initially anxious that any direct communication with the Chinese on the subject of Tibet might risk endangering the lives of his trade agents, but Morley believed that the situation needed to be addressed and that China had to be confronted sooner rather than later. Grey agreed to this after consulting Jordan in Peking, but then prevaricated and it was not until 9 February 1910, only three days before Chinese troops entered Lhasa, that all branches of the British Foreign Service agreed to talk to China; even then their aim was merely to attempt to establish the nature of Chinese plans for Tibet and how that might impinge on British interests in the area.[46]

For the Dalai Lama this was hardly enough, and the situation was suddenly and dramatically resolved for all concerned when he fled his capital yet again rather than allow himself to fall into Chinese hands. As he subsequently explained to Bell in India, he had hoped that the Manchu court would honour an undertaking given to him by the emperor himself that the November decree would be rescinded, but since the emperor's

sudden death in November 1908 there was clearly no longer anyone left in Peking capable or willing to carry out this promise. He had taken the decision to leave quite suddenly, and only hours before the Chinese arrived, because he could no longer trust the integrity of the Manchu court.[47]

The Dalai Lama's fears that the Chinese had intended to exploit him were soon confirmed by the behaviour of Chinese soldiers once they had entered Lhasa. As his men rampaged around the city, looting and destroying Tibetan homes and temples, General Chung Ying gave orders for the Tibetan ruler to be seized and brought back to his capital, alive or dead. A huge force then gave chase, catching up with the Dalai Lama's party at Kangma where a pitched battle took place during which ten Chinese soldiers were killed. Miraculously the Dalai Lama himself managed to escape and at once made for Phari, which he reached on 19 February. Lots were then cast in the traditional way and Gnatong selected as his next destination. On the following day he reached the trade mart at Yatung with an escort of only a hundred men, telling the astonished British trade agent, David Macdonald, that it was his intention to travel to India in order to 'negotiate' with the Indian government.[48]

To British eyes the situation seemed volatile. First, news of the Dalai Lama's flight had reached Minto in reports from British trade agents at Yatung and Gyantse, and news of the battle at Kangma had alarmed him. He therefore ordered Macdonald to give the Dalai Lama no help at Yatung other than to offer him overnight accommodation in the *dak* bungalows used for travellers, and then only on the understanding that he should not be encouraged to regard this as a place of sanctuary from the Chinese.[49] In the absence of any positive information about the scope or scale of Chinese movements Minto's caution was understandable since India had no wish to become embroiled in any dispute with Peking, especially in circumstances where the lives of his trade agents might be endangered. He also feared that the situation might adversely affect British relations with the Himalayan states of Bhutan, Sikkim and Nepal, each of which had separate treaty agreements with both Tibet and China which threatened to draw them into the conflict. Even before the Dalai Lama set foot in Yatung Indian policy thus remained unformulated and the viceroy unsure of how best to proceed.[50]

On 22 February Minto received an account of events at Yatung from David Macdonald. The Dalai Lama's arrival at the trade mart had already created great problems for him after his guest had refused to meet a Chinese delegation which had apparently been sent to 'discuss' the situation with him. Finding himself compromised, Macdonald had been obliged to support the Dalai Lama's refusal to receive the Chinese, a difficult moral decision for him because he knew that a Chinese army of some 300 men was at that moment en route to nearby Phari and that the Dalai Lama was in a precarious position.

Macdonald eventually solved his problem by allowing the Tibetan party to slip quietly away from the mart, but by doing so he unwittingly created complications for Minto by encouraging the Dalai Lama to believe that he would find sanctuary in India.[51] It is likely that O'Connor's contact with the Tibetan ruler in Peking would have already sown the seeds for this belief, and that Minto may have even sanctioned the visit. In any event Macdonald was never reprimanded for his actions which allowed the Tibetans to escape, and no attempt was ever made by the Indian government to discourage the Dalai Lama coming to India.[52]

In Peking, meanwhile, the problem of how to approach the Chinese had still not been resolved and the situation in Tibet remained one of particular concern to Britain's chargé d'affaires, Sir Freidrich Max-Muller, who had replaced Jordan during the latter's much-needed leave of absence. Like Jordan, Max-Muller was reluctant to tackle the Wai Wu Pu at such a delicate time and favoured a more subtle approach. His idea was to ask the Chinese how their occupation of Lhasa might affect Britain's existing treaty arrangements with China and Russia.[53] Morley felt that one option might be tactfully to explain to China that Britain could not be indifferent to events in Tibet because, by invading Lhasa, they had contravened the terms of the adhesion agreement of 1906. In spite of his continuing commitment to non-involvement, Morley was keen to ensure that the British government was not seen to condone any attempt by China to establish permanent political control in Lhasa because such a move would almost certainly pose a real threat to the settled frontier, which remained the main aim of the non-involvement policy. Before Max-Muller could approach the Wai Wu Pu with these observations, however, matters were dramatically altered by the announcement from Peking of a new imperial decree denouncing the Dalai Lama and stripping him of all his powers and titles.[54]

The Chinese foreign minister, Liang Tu-yen, had always denied knowledge of a Chinese invasion, arguing that Chinese troops were merely acting in accordance with treaty obligations which required them to 'police' the Lhasa area. While admitting that he had known about the decree beforehand, he told Max-Muller rather unconvincingly that he had simply 'forgotten' to mention it to him. This strange attitude was adopted by the Wai Wu Pu in order to cover the fact that, by now, they had little ability to control Chao's campaign which was being orchestrated from Sichuan, a process made easier by the deaths of the emperor and dowager empress within hours of each other in November 1908, and by the long-expected collapse of the Manchu dynasty.[55]

Despite the furore occasioned by this new decree, Minto believed the Dalai Lama's spiritual role to be unaffected and, using this as an excuse, he pressed ahead with a plan to defuse the crisis by inviting him to India as the spiritual leader of the Tibetan people, sending Bell to meet and welcome him at Darjeeling soon after he crossed the Indian border.[56] The

Dalai Lama's second flight had transformed the invasion crisis by once again creating an obvious vacuum in Lhasa which the Indian government could not ignore in the interests of their own frontier security. It also had broader political implications for India because, on this occasion, he had not simply disappeared into the hinterlands of Mongolia but had chosen India as a refuge and in doing so had threatened to bring Britain and China into direct conflict.

Bell was negotiating a treaty in Bhutan when the Chinese invaded Lhasa and he did not hear about the Dalai Lama's flight until a few days before his summons to Darjeeling.[57] His first meeting with the Tibetan leader in the unromantic surroundings of a Darjeeling hotel room was inauspicious for, as he later observed, the 'squat figure' who received him did not look at all like a king.[58] In the months that followed this meeting, however, Bell had time to review this opinion and the warm friendship that developed between them would have positive long-term consequences for Anglo-Tibetan relations. Like many Curzonians Bell felt that London's non-involvement policy had been at least partly responsible for stimulating the aggressive Chinese forward policy, which had led to the capture of Lhasa, by encouraging the Chinese to think that such a move would be unopposed by Britain. As political officer in Sikkim responsible for a vast tract of the Himalayas covering Bhutan, Sikkim and Nepal, moreover, he both feared and resented the prospect of any permanent Chinese presence in Tibet which might interfere with the Indian government's own plans for imperialist expansion in this area. His earlier association with the Panchen Lama had made him initially sceptical of the Dalai Lama's motives, but, as their friendship grew, and Bell came to understand more about the problems faced by the Lhasa authorities, he became increasingly exasperated by his own government's Tibetan policy and came to believe that Tibetan interests should not continue to be ignored. He strongly supported the Dalai Lama's interpretation of events, agreeing with him that the problem was far wider than Tibet, and that the Chinese now expected to reclaim what they also considered to be their established feudatory rights in Nepal and Bhutan. Bell further appreciated that though the Dalai Lama's spiritual influence was extensive in Mongolia and Siberia, as well as in large parts of China itself, it was not sufficiently powerful to force the Sichuan authorities to abandon their pacification programme. For all these reasons he was deeply concerned about Chinese behaviour in Tibet, fearing that its implications for India's future relations with the neighbouring Himalayan states were being discounted in London, where everything still seemed to be sacrificed in the interests of non-involvement.[59]

Three months after his arrival in Darjeeling Bell was told to inform the Dalai Lama that the Indian government would not intervene between Tibet and China. He experienced great difficulty in getting this message across, however, because by now the Dalai Lama had accepted India as

Tibet's protector in a dramatic reversal of thinking to that preceding the Younghusband invasion, only six years before, when he had refused to even open a letter from the Indian viceroy. However, the extent to which he really believed that the British would help him was called into question by the number of Buddhist protests inside India itself that were organised by his supporters in an attempt to persuade Minto to change his mind. Bell observed that though the protests in themselves had little immediate impact on wider public opinion in India they did succeed in drawing attention to Chinese aggression, and to their motives for invading Tibet – particularly, as in 1903, they themselves had complained bitterly about British imperialist aggression. In addition, the exotic presence of the Dalai Lama and his extensive and growing retinue in Darjeeling kept the Tibetan issue alive, generating concern for the safety of Indian trade, commerce and personnel in the affected areas, as well as giving the international press ample opportunity to yet again publicly criticise Britain's role in Asia. Had the Dalai Lama not come to India Chinese activity in these remote Himalayan regions would not have excited nearly so much attention, and the opinions of men like Bell, who had openly warned of the dangerous consequences of ignoring Chinese forward policy, would almost certainly have gone unheeded.[60] Bell continued to visit the Dalai Lama almost every week during the course of 1910, and although he knew that there was little he could do politically to help Tibet he was able to acquire a sound understanding of Tibetan attitudes and customs which began to prove invaluable to him personally, enhancing his reputation even further as Britain's foremost expert on Tibet, a position previously held by Francis Younghusband.[61]

When the Dalai Lama first arrived in India Minto had dutifully complied with Morley's instructions not to intervene in Tibetan affairs and had continued to treat the Dalai Lama as an honoured guest of the Indian government. Ironically, the imperial decree deposing him had helped in this because it had been possible to continue to argue that the Dalai Lama had been invited to India simply as the spiritual leader of Tibet, allowing the whole issue of what the Chinese intended to do in Tibet to be conveniently shelved.[62]

Minto felt that he could not ignore forever the implications which the Tibetan situation had for India's relations with Nepal, Bhutan and Sikkim, who now seemed poised to become the next victims of Chinese aggression if India failed to act. He was also not blind to the very obvious fact that there were now at least 2,000 Chinese troops in Tibet and he, too, began to accept the Dalai Lama's argument that they were not simply there to guard Tibetan interests. Comprehensive reports from his trade agents at Gyantse and Yatung served only to reinforce Minto's fears and confirm his opinion that something must be done to prevent the Chinese moving even closer to the frontiers of India. He also knew that Bell possessed copies of the correspondence between the Dalai Lama and those of his

ministers still left in Lhasa, which provided clear evidence that the Tibetan leader and his supporters in India were in great personal danger. Minto was politically astute enough to appreciate that, having agreed to shelter the Tibetans at the risk of courting Chinese hostility, he had already crossed a line and had committed India to a path that could well pay future dividends should the Dalai Lama manage to regain control of Tibet. With this in mind, therefore, he had spent months collecting hard evidence of Chinese infringements of the adhesion agreement, however petty, which he was now prepared to use in support of the Dalai Lama if necessary.[63] His sense of urgency was further fuelled by reports coming in from his military advisers about a build up of Chinese troops in the Assam Himalayas and of renewed Chinese activity in Yatung, both of which he felt constituted a serious threat to Indian security which would need to be addressed quickly. He therefore suggested to Morley that the Chinese be politely asked to reduce the size of their garrison at Yatung and to withdraw the Lhasa *amban*, Lien Yu, whose haughty attitude he now believed had provoked the Dalai Lama's flight.[64]

Once again, as in 1903, the viceroy and the India Office came into direct and open conflict over Tibetan policy. Morley insisted that a strong Chinese presence in Lhasa was far preferable to the 'feeble rule of the Dalai Lama', and would not contemplate giving any support to his possible return to Tibet. He asked Minto instead to monitor the frontier closely and encourage his guest to lie low. In accordance with the spirit of this request, and in an effort to keep him occupied and hopeful, Minto invited the Dalai Lama to Calcutta for a private audience with him.[65]

When the Tibetan leader arrived in Calcutta in March 1910, however, Lady Minto recalled the occasion as a sad repetition of the Panchen Lama's interview, the visitor making a number of requests for support which her husband politely, but firmly, rejected. Minto was himself in a difficult position in the absence of support from London and could offer little practical help, but this official rebuff did not deflate the Dalai Lama as it had earlier done the Panchen Lama and, once back in Darjeeling, he continued to bombard Bell with demands that a British representative be sent to Lhasa to plead his case with the Chinese. In April 1910 the Dalai Lama made a formal request for the British to intervene directly to halt Chinese aggression in his country. When this failed he began to beg for any kind of help.[66]

Although India could no longer expect to act as independently as they had done in Curzon's day, the more sympathetic attitude adopted by Bell and Minto towards the Dalai Lama by 1910 is itself a reflection of the marked change in thinking inside India towards the Dalai Lama and the status of Tibet. Curzon could not, for example, have contemplated an independent Tibetan state, except as a buffer for India, and had cast the Dalai Lama and the Lhasa authorities as villains in order to justify the British invasion of Tibet. Now the Indian government under Minto were

proposing that Britain should help the Tibetans free themselves from Chinese influence for their own sake and not merely to service the needs of India. As Younghusband's account of the period wryly states, the spectacle of the Dalai Lama pleading for an interview with the viceroy was completely at odds with the situation under Curzon, when the roles had been reversed.[67]

This new Indian approach was of course quite unacceptable to the British legation in Peking who continued to regard the Dalai Lama as a great barrier to successful Anglo-Chinese relations. A deepening rift between the two branches of the British Foreign Service in China and India would soon have serious implications for the future of Tibet as Chinese forward policy became more pronounced. Like the Younghusband invasion of 1903, the Dalai Lama's actions now created a catalyst in frontier relations after 1908, exposing London's indecision and uncertainty about frontier matters, as well as exposing their marked reluctance to accept the reality of Chinese forward policy.

Between 1908 and 1910 there was a general perception amongst British personnel working on India's north-east frontier, as well as inside Tibet itself, that the non-involvement policy had served only to increase Chinese influence there to the point where it had begun to threaten India. Their fears were intensified by developing Chinese interest in the Assam Himalayas and were especially noticeable after the British withdrawal from the Chumbi valley, an area which Frederick O'Connor had described as one of 'peculiar significance and importance'. To Curzon's supporters the loss of this valley in February 1908 was a disaster of the first magnitude for without a British presence there they believed that the Chinese could not fail to make full use of this easy access into India. Bounded on either side by Sikkim and Bhutan, the valley already contained sizeable garrisons within a few hundred miles of the Indian frontier from which the Chinese could despatch more troops and officials to 'worry' British agents and 'intrigue' with the rulers of the neighbouring Himalayan states, whose relations with India were still tenuous and ill-defined.[68]

These fears were supported by other experts like Eric Wilton of the China Consular Service who also agreed that British frontier policy ought to be reformulated to face the very real possibility that the Chinese might use Chumbi as a base from which to launch an attack on India.[69] Missionary observers like French Ridley of the China Inland Mission at Kansu told Jordan of the widespread alarm amongst colleagues also working in East Tibet who felt that, since the Younghusband invasion, Chinese prestige had been gained at British expense. Although Jordan was quick to disassociate himself from such extremist sentiments, by 1910 he too was beginning to admit to some concern about the implications of Chinese interest in East Tibet.[70] The situation was now so volatile in fact that even foreign observers like the Swedish explorer Sven Hedin, who had himself suffered

the effects of the British ban on travel and had no love for the British Foreign Office, thought that the state of affairs looked very ominous for the future of British India.[71]

In India itself concern turned to widespread alarm as the months passed after the withdrawal of British troops from Chumbi and, in a confidential report to Minto in November 1910, Indian foreign secretary Sir Harcourt Butler outlined the deteriorating frontier situation in great detail, citing the slow but relentless Chinese advance as a real threat to Indian security and recommending that an urgent redistribution of British armed forces on the Indian frontier with Tibet should take place. Like Bell, Harcourt Butler favoured the promotion of Treaty ties with Bhutan, as well as the strengthening of existing links between India, Nepal and Sikkim as a means of countering Chinese infiltration and so avoid a repetition of the events of 1903 when the main threat to Indian security was believed to have come from Russia.[72]

During 1910 the re-emergence of what many regarded as an unhealthy Russian interest in East Tibet had surfaced when a Russian expedition led by the celebrated Russian explorer, Pyotor Kozlov, had left Moscow in 1907, ostensibly to explore and scientifically investigate the area around Kokonor, a region regarded by the British and the Tibetans as part of Tibet. The motives and behaviour of the expedition had even called into question the solidity of the Anglo-Russian Convention, as concern amounting to hysteria gripped the British Foreign Office when, within months of the expiry date of the notes banning frontier travel, it became known that Kozlov had abandoned his agreed itinerary in order to visit the Dalai Lama at Kumbum monastery in Kansu, where the Russian monk Aghvan Dorjiev was also thought to be staying. Although Kozlov's activities had given both Grey and the British War Office a fright, the main problem that emerged when all the fuss had eventually died down was the fact that so little was known about the boundaries of East Tibet. The War Office in particular felt that this area would need to be further explored and carefully delimited in case Russia or China took the opportunity afforded to 'fill the vacuum'.[73]

Between 1908 and 1910 British non-involvement policy began to unravel as it became increasingly obvious that a Chinese forward policy existed and that it was posing a real threat to Indian security and British interests in the Himalayas. British policy towards Tibet had also begun to change. This was partly the result of the Dalai Lama's lengthy stay in India, during which the Indian government had been made aware of the importance of courting Tibet as a means of stemming the Chinese advance, but was also because the Tibetan people had begun to look to Britain for support against the Chinese as a result of this new association with India. Although London remained largely unconvinced, at the end of Minto's tenure as viceroy in 1910 this whole change of attitude towards the Dalai Lama inside India would ensure that his successor, Lord Charles

Hardinge, would come to regard the restoration of the Dalai Lama's rule in Lhasa as India's greatest insurance policy.

In the relatively short space of two years, Britain's whole approach to Tibet's status had been transformed. In the next few years events inside China would evolve in such a way that Britain would be inexorably drawn into Tibet's internal affairs, and such involvement would be seen as the best means of preserving Anglo-Chinese harmony and continuing the British occupation of India, increasingly destabilised by the burgeoning Indian independence movement.

5 Revolution, invasion and independence

Britain, Tibet and China, 1910–1913

Help. Big worms are eating little worms!

Dalai Lama and council of Tibet to Britain and ministers of Europe

In November 1910 Lord Hardinge and Lord Crewe replaced Lord Minto and Lord Morley, respectively, as viceroy and secretary of state for India. Whitehall hoped that their long-standing friendship would not only lead to a peaceful continuation of the status quo in Tibetan policy but would avoid the many conflicts that had dogged the Minto/Morley administration.[1] Within months of taking office, however, the non-involvement policy was first reassessed, and then virtually abandoned as London began to accept that Chinese forward policy was a reality and that Tibet needed to be protected against growing Chinese aggression if India was to remain safe.

One of the main reasons behind the decision to review non-involvement was the result of an escalation in Chinese activity in areas close to the Indian border in the remote tribal regions of Assam and neighbouring Tawang.[2] The Chinese invasion of Lhasa in February 1910 now made it feasible for them to launch an attack on these regions, using the city as a base, and in the final months of his viceroyalty Minto had been deeply concerned about the fate of the largely unmapped Indo-Burma frontier, which would be left vulnerable in the event of any Chinese takeover in Assam.[3]

The extent to which the Chinese campaign was really as organised as many in India believed was highly questionable however, as the various factions pulling against each other in the dying months of the Manchu dynasty were, by now, quite incapable of co-operating enough to make such a campaign viable on a national level. In Lhasa, for example, the much-hated *amban*, Lien Yu, was behaving in a way that seemed totally at odds with instructions from Peking, and by 1910 the increasingly powerful provincial governments of Yunnan and Sichuan were already operating like independent states as China slid inexorably towards revolution. Finally, in Peking itself, the newly created board for Tibetan and

Mongolian affairs and the Wai Wu Pu functioned in apparent ignorance of each other's existence.[4]

The Indian government had been kept aware of these divisions by Grey, who himself relied upon information supplied to him by the Chinese legation in London. Despite all this evidence to the contrary, however, Minto had continued to view Chinese frontier infiltration as part of a wider strategy aimed ultimately at the subjugation of India and upper Burma and, when Hardinge became viceroy at the end of 1910, this approach was ongoing. Indian fears then increased as between September 1910 and March 1911 Chao's troops moved forward into Pome and Zayaul, two tracts of tribal land in the Assam Himalayas under informal British control.

Until Chinese troops had invaded these remote regions they had drawn little British interest beyond a mild curiosity about their possible commercial value to India. Their importance to Chao, however, was both strategic and practical, providing him not only with a shorter supply route between Sichuan and Lhasa but also with potential land for further Chinese settlements, the area being largely fertile and the climate particularly suited for growing rice, the preferred staple diet of the Chinese colonists he hoped to attract. By August 1911 he had tentatively settled in Zayaul, establishing a Chinese garrison at Chikang near Rima, the main administrative centre in the region and disturbingly close to the borders of India.[5]

When Hardinge and Crewe took office the Indian government still had no reliable information about the Assam Himalayas or the extent of Tibetan influence amongst the tribes living there. Travellers' reports in the past had indicated extensive Tibetan influence in neighbouring Tawang and, in June 1908, Minto had authorised some limited exploration of the area for the purpose of mapping and surveying. The reasons for this move had not been entirely investigatory, however. Great pressure had been put upon him by British-owned tea and timber companies in Assam who wanted their existing investments protected and saw fresh opportunities to extend their commercial empires. This in turn had led to the establishment of British administrative posts along the Assam foothills and, in his capacity as political officer for Sikkim, Sir Charles Bell, in collaboration with Burma's lieutenant-governor, Sir Lancelot Hare, had pushed for even further exploration, this time with a view to convincing the various tribes to accept British protection, if necessary by imposing treaties on them which might then be legally defended in the event of Chinese aggression. To this end Bell had proposed the creation of two separate frontier districts to be directly supervised by Indian officials, and shortly before his departure from India in late 1910 Minto had been finally persuaded to establish full control over the whole Lohit valley in order to provide a buffer for India's borders by extending the outer line of British control to the very edges of Tibet.[6]

At first Hardinge and Crewe were both very uneasy about the situation

in Assam and were reluctant to intervene, although they did feel justified in condoning punitive missions into the Assam Himalayas when British personnel were attacked. Hardinge soon began to regard Chinese infiltration into the area as a worrying new development when he received reports that Chinese troops had interfered with frontier trade. News that they had actually occupied Pome and Zayaul convinced him that some action must be taken.[7] The people of Pome were of mixed Tibetan blood but had preserved their independence, mainly because their region was too remote to attract the attentions of the Lhasa authorities. They had fiercely resisted the Chinese and, in late 1910, had not only murdered a Chinese official but had managed to repel a Chinese punitive mission sent against them. Despite further successive attempts to subdue them during the course of 1911, the people of Pome had held out, and their successful resistance marked the start of a humiliating Chinese withdrawal from the area.[8]

The combined effects of events in Pome and Zayaul between 1910 and 1911, together with Chinese attempts to woo local Assamese tribes like the Mishmi, Abor and Miri, were but minor irritations compared to the hysteria engendered by the violent death of Noel Williamson, the British political officer at Sadiya. Williamson had been an ambitious young man and a strong supporter of British forward policy in the Assam foothills. His alleged murder by members of the Abor tribe during an exploratory expedition to their territory in March 1911 exposed the weakness of Indian frontier policy, igniting demands for revenge and fuelling public speculation in Britain about possible Chinese involvement in the crime.[9]

Despite the seriousness of the Williamson murder, events in the Assam Himalayas were only partly responsible for the changes in British Tibetan policy during 1911. The problem that developed at the small village of Pienma on the borders of Burma affected British attitudes to the whole Indian frontier. Britain had annexed upper Burma in 1886 and by 1910 were still confused about where a Sino-Burma boundary might be drawn, since much of the borderlands were composed of impenetrable jungles, inhabited by tribes who had little respect for the needs of British India.[10]

Tensions erupted at Pienma in the spring of 1910 when the Burma government reported that Chinese forces had established a ‘cultural centre’ in the village. Matters then came to a head when these rumours were investigated by Archibald Rose, the British consul-general at Tengyueh, who had received information that the Chinese had stationed a detachment of the Yunnanese provincial army there. Taking this on trust, Sir Harvey Adamson, governor-general of Burma, then sent his own expedition to Pienma under the leadership of W.F. Hertz, an experienced officer who arrived there in January 1911 only to discover that Rose had apparently been misled and that the ‘cultural centre’ in question in fact consisted of one elderly Chinese schoolmaster who was more than happy to return to Yunnan when requested. The Chinese responded to this

insult by boycotting British trade in the area and by lodging a formal complaint to the British Foreign Office in London. Soon after the Hertz party withdrew, Chinese forces reoccupied Pienma, but Adamson was unable to persuade Grey to allow him to intervene again.

Although a relatively minor matter, the incident had created a poor impression of British competence and had proved very damaging to British prestige. For once the India Office, the Peking legation, and the British Foreign Office were all united in opposing Hertz's return, and Grey forbade any similar attempts to send British expeditions into the area. The Pienma crisis had not only threatened to upset Anglo-Chinese relations but had revealed to the world unhealthy divisions between policy-makers in India, Burma and London, reflecting badly on the Indian administration in general which now became the butt of many Foreign Office jokes. In Peking Jordan had also become heavily embroiled in the crisis when, much to his irritation, he was forced to defend Hertz and Adamson against Chinese accusations of foul play. The whole incident helped to reinforce his distrust of the India Service, which became more pronounced as time went on.[11]

The Williamson murder and the Pienma fiasco, together with the threats of Chinese infiltration into territories bordering India, all played a part in promoting the major frontier policy review of September 1911, commissioned by Crewe and Hardinge in an attempt to bring the situation on India's borders under control. Its recommendations were ostensibly based upon a need to punish and control the Abors, officially held responsible for Williamson's death, but were also designed to frustrate what Hardinge felt certain was a well-orchestrated Chinese campaign to annex this part of the frontier. Although many of the new policy review proposals had been originally put forward by Minto in 1910, acting on advice from his men on the spot and based upon the idea that the Assam hill country should come under informal British control, the new policy represented a true change of heart on the part of a British government which had forcefully promoted non-involvement since 1905. It had real implications for the Tibetans who now formally claimed Tawang as part of Tibet on the grounds that it had always previously been under informal Tibetan control.

Although not as radical as many in India would have liked, the idea of creating a permanent extended northern boundary for India represented a positive change of perspective. Grey in particular disliked the concept of the tribal frontier because he felt that it increased the possibility of frontier incidents like Pienma, and he saw no sense in annexing territory that was impossible to control. Having reluctantly agreed to the new policy, however, he now faced the problem of how to explain its existence to the Chinese.[12]

Grey's immediate priority was to minimise any damage to Anglo-Chinese relations and he therefore decided that the best way forward was to approach the Chinese directly. Unfortunately, he also felt it wiser not to

mention the new policy to either the Dalai Lama or his government in Lhasa on the rather flimsy pretext that they might overreact to what might be seen as a second British invasion of Tibetan Tawang. Hardinge also chose not to inform the Chinese about the despatch of the punitive expedition against the Abors in 1911, or about similar subsequent expeditions against the Mishmi and Miri tribes, a sign that India was less concerned than London about offending the Chinese than they were about the growing Chinese presence in Tawang.[13]

In the event the new policy was rendered unenforceable as the result of the confusion generated by Chinese revolutionary disturbances in the area, but it did have important consequences for British Tibetan policy by conveniently reviving British interest in Tibetan affairs at a time when the Dalai Lama most needed British support.

Before the full extent of Chinese infiltration had become apparent at the end of 1910 Morley had sanctioned a complete withdrawal of British troops from the Indo-Tibetan border, following assurances from Peking that the Chinese were able to offer adequate protection to British agents at the trade marts. Grey had been able to reassure both Japanese and Russian consuls that Britain had 'no selfish ambitions' in Tibet, and life on the frontier and at the trade marts inside Tibet seemed set to return to what passed for normality.[14]

The months before the Chinese revolution began to disturb the relative peace of the trade marts in November 1911 produced tensions of their own, and British trade agents at Gyantse and Yatung faced new kinds of problems as the Manchu regime in Peking began to falter. At Gyantse, for example, Lieutenant-Colonel James Weir found himself in almost daily conflict with Ma Chi-Fu, the newly appointed Chinese superintendent of the Tibetan trade marts and now the second most powerful Chinese official in Tibet after the Lhasa *amban*, Lien Yu. Controversy had been building for some time over monies payable to Tibetan officials for land rented by the Indian government on which they proposed to erect a new trade agency, a signal to both the Chinese and the Tibetans that the British had no intention of leaving Tibet for the foreseeable future.

Weir had urgently requested the new buildings in September 1910, although the need for them had been appreciated long before this as the existing accommodation was embarrassingly dilapidated. There had been little difficulty in persuading Ma's predecessor, the tao tai Lo, that the building was necessary, but Lo had been one of the older, more co-operative school of Chinese officials, and Ma quickly showed that he was going to be far less philosophical about the continuing British presence inside Tibet when he began to actively endorse Tibetan objections to this illegal use of their land. Weir had been able to ignore Tibetan demands for compensation and higher rents in Lo's day, but now he could no longer argue with any credibility that the Indian government should not be liable for rents because they did not intend to stay on in Gyantse.[15]

In addition to the dispute over the new agency buildings, Weir was also engaged in a bitter battle with Ma over the purchase of a water mill near the Tsechen temple, just outside Gyantse, which he needed as a secure store for vital transport and wheat supplies. Like Chang before him, Ma now began to act as the senior official, countering Weir at every opportunity and siding with local Tibetan officials who refused to sanction the sale of the mill on the grounds that it was outside the boundary limits of the trade mart and was therefore not available to the British under the terms of the 1908 Trade Regulations Agreement. When Weir responded by suggesting that Ma had himself broken Article 2 of the same regulations by negotiating directly with the Tibetans without first consulting him, the scene seemed set for a complex wrangle which could so easily generate the kind of crisis London wished to avoid. Why then, in view of the delicate frontier situation that had developed, did London choose to support Weir in this relatively minor issue when O'Connor's pleas for help in similar circumstances only three years earlier had got him nowhere?[16]

Firstly, there was an obvious and pressing need to protect British personnel. The poor state of the existing agency buildings were a real threat to British prestige, which could not be undermined in this way at a time when the Chinese were appointing high-flying new officials like Ma to key frontier posts. Secondly, for the Indian government at least, the retention of the trade marts and a trading presence inside Tibet was still an important economic and commercial end in itself. Potential investors were reluctant to allow any developing trade to wither away and, in the interests of frontier security, it was unwise to allow the Chinese or Tibetans to ban Indian trade or bar Indian traders from existing trade routes. Thirdly, it was essential for the Indian military authorities to ensure that if they were to retain a sizeable escort at the trade marts their men should be adequately housed, fed and equipped, perhaps with a view to increasing the size of the force in the event of the type of sudden crisis endemic to India's frontiers.

For all these reasons the proposal to build a new agency had not been opposed in principle, but the remarkable thing about the situation in 1910 was the fact that both the Foreign Office and the India Office were willing to risk greater conflict by exerting pressure on Peking in order to persuade them to agree to building work going ahead before the cold season began in October, despite obvious Chinese reluctance to accept the new buildings. Morley even supported moves to blackmail them into agreement by using Minto's carefully compiled lists of treaty infringements at Gyantse – ultimately a successful move, for in April 1911 Jordan was able to report to Grey that the land had been finally handed over and that the new agency buildings could proceed as planned.[17]

The British had got their way, but the conflict had proved very divisive, exposing the high levels of tension that now existed between the Peking government and their officials on the spot. In the event, and despite

instructions from Peking ordering him to co-operate, Ma continued to try to obstruct the progress of the new agency by insisting that Weir liaise with Lhasa before the land could be finally handed over, a move which delayed the start of the building by two months, making it impossible to complete before the onset of winter that year.[18]

Although in many ways such petty incidents were typical of the pattern of life at the marts, with British, Chinese and Tibetan officials pulling against each other in an atmosphere of mutual distrust, the conflict over the new agency buildings provides an interesting insight into the extent to which the new breed of Chinese official, represented by Chang and Ma, conducted themselves, and, more particularly, the extent to which their behaviour was increasingly influenced by the independent policy conducted by Lien Yu in Lhasa and not by the tottering administration in Peking. For Minto, and subsequently for Hardinge, this was a serious indication of how far the political system had collapsed in China, and was an unpleasant foretaste of things to come.[19]

The main concern of the Indian government in the months before the Chinese Revolution began in earnest was the protection of their trade agents inside Tibet. Minto had encouraged the build up of a sizeable army on the Indo-Tibetan border before he left India, which Morley had ordered him to withdraw. In the volatile climate of 1911 this no longer seemed wise, and Crewe insisted that a sizeable escort should be retained at Gyantse and Yatung until the Chinese could guarantee the safety of British personnel who remained there. Events at Gyantse had indicated that Weir should not rely on Chinese protection as Peking could no longer control the activities of their officials on the spot, let alone protect British lives, even if they were willing to do so.[20]

By June 1911 the situation appeared to be calmer, however, and reports from both Yatung and Gyantse seemed to suggest that, as their troops were now able to patrol the main trade routes effectively, the Chinese could claim to be in control, making the case for a withdrawal of British troops legally convincing. With some reluctance, and in the interests of maintaining good Anglo-Chinese relations, Crewe therefore began to consider making preparations for the withdrawal of agency escorts. Unlike Morley, who was always eager to leave Tibet, Crewe tended to see the issue of agency escorts and the British presence in Tibet as part of a much wider frontier problem. Conscious of the threat posed by Chinese infiltration in the Assam and the Burma borders, he was wary of giving the Chinese too much too soon, preferring to wait with a view to using any withdrawal of British troops from Tibet as a concession with which to bargain with over Assam and Burma. Hardinge, on the other hand, felt that a prompt withdrawal was a useful concession in itself that might be used as evidence of India's goodwill.[21]

In July 1911, with the decision to withdraw troops still unmade, the Indian government began to receive reports that Chinese control at the

Tibetan marts had once again broken down and that earlier optimism about their ability to retain control had been misplaced. At the India Office, Crewe now became convinced that the situation on the north-east Frontier could never be truly settled until the Dalai Lama returned to Lhasa, and Hardinge agreed with Jordan that any immediate withdrawal of troops from Tibet and its borders could only endanger British lives.

With India keen to retain their agency escorts and complete the work on the new agency buildings at Gyantse, and with the Chinese presence continuing to build along the borders of India, Grey also came to believe that an immediate troop withdrawal was unwise. His reluctance to come to a decision in this situation of conflicting views and rapidly changing events was an indication to many old Foreign Office hands that, in such circumstances, it was wiser to leave the final judgement to the Indian government, a triumphant victory for the Politicals, whose courage and tenacity had kept Curzon's vision alive in defiance of the political trend in London.[22]

A potentially explosive and completely unexpected crisis threatened the trade marts in the immediate pre-revolutionary period when the Chinese decided to increase the size and scale of its postal service inside Tibet. Under Article 8 of the 1908 Trade Regulations it had been agreed that, providing the Chinese could organise an efficient postal service in Tibet, the existing private arrangement by which British trade agents sent mail to and from India would cease and all mail would go via the Chinese Postal Service. The Politicals, the Indian government, the India Office, and Jordan all took a very jaundiced view of the Chinese Postal Service, based on their past experience. Writing to Grey in February 1911, Raymond Ritchie, under-secretary of state for the India Office, made reference to the fact that the Chinese service remained dangerously unreliable, citing as evidence at least two cases where important British papers had gone astray. On one occasion letters travelling to the Tibetan regent in Lhasa containing British protests about Tibetan infringements of the Lhasa Convention had simply failed to arrive, and in a second incident a letter for the British Foreign Office, travelling by the same route but in the opposite direction, had met a similar fate.[23]

In Peking Jordan felt particularly sceptical about the claims for excellence made by the new Chinese Board of Communications, but there were more than doubts about the efficiency of the Chinese service involved. Fears that Chinese officials might find it much easier than ever before to vet all correspondence travelling across Tibet to Lhasa, India and elsewhere were uppermost in the minds of British trade agents, since the proposed new arrangements would now prevent them despatching their own mail privately and so jeopardise their only means of transmitting sensitive information safely.[24]

Further complications now arose when the Chinese announced that they wished to install telegraph lines between Chamdo and Gyantse in

order to open 'post offices' at Shigatse, Gartok and Gyantse and so establish what they described as an exchange Service for Lhasa mail at Yatung. Hardinge was very alarmed by this as Yatung was too near to the Indian border for comfort, and he therefore suggested that Jordan be asked to find out why this site had been chosen and to recommend Gyantse as a more suitable alternative which he would support, providing that the Chinese could prove their ability to run an efficient service. Grey and Crewe each agreed that this was a reasonable request, but Hardinge decided not to pursue the matter for fear of opening a dangerous dialogue about the wisdom of expanding the telegraph services in general, Indian lines having been abandoned because of the difficulties of keeping them upright in the face of natural Tibetan antagonism towards them.[25]

The issue was to be further complicated by the ongoing and quite separate official correspondence being conducted between the director-general of the Chinese Imperial Post and his counterpart in India. The Chinese Imperial Post was part of the Chinese Customs Service headed by Sir Francis Aglen. Like Henderson, Aglen also experienced the joys associated with serving two masters, which meant that, though employed by the Chinese, as a British subject he was expected to put British needs first. Jordan had always felt that the presence of the Chinese Customs Service had created unnecessary problems in his dealings with the Chinese court, particularly as Aglen's predecessor Sir Robert Hart had appeared to exercise so much influence with the deceased dowager empress, Tzu Hsi, and her court. Jordan was now anxious to prevent what he felt were outsiders like Aglen becoming involved in this essentially Indian frontier issue because, in the past, they had managed to stir up a lot of trouble for British personnel. By April 1911 he was under heavy pressure from the Wai Wu Pu to agree to the opening of the Chinese Exchange Service at Yatung and to an extension of the Chinese Postal Service across Tibet, developments which would inevitably result in the loss of the existing private mail service used by British trade agents which Aglen had made it quite clear he disliked. In such circumstances Jordan was naturally unwilling to pursue what he considered to be this relatively minor matter of the Chinese Postal Service which ultimately only affected India, for fear of becoming embroiled in a much larger dispute with the still powerful Chinese Customs Service at a time when there was so much at stake, with Chinese activity on the Burma border increasingly causing concern. As a way of moving things forward as the year drew to a close, Jordan therefore asked Grey if he might request that the high-level correspondence between India and the Chinese Customs Service over the Postal Service might be put on hold in order to give him time to approach the Wai Wu Pu about the matter in his own time.[26]

In the event, revolution in China intervened to prevent any permanent settlement of this issue and all governments turned their attention to

more pressing concerns. The problem of sending and receiving information safely was an important one, given the isolated conditions inside Tibet, and one that had presented a major difficulty for the British when they first arrived with Younghusband in 1903. In the final months before the Chinese revolution began to affect the Tibetan trade marts it shows the extent to which the complexity of the frontier situation and the steady growth of Chinese confidence made it impossible to settle even the simplest issue without triggering a reaction elsewhere. In the context of the delicate balance of power that had evolved between 1910 and 1911, Chinese claims to run the postal service were seen by the British as yet another sinister plot to extend their power and oust them from Tibet before they were ready to leave.

With conditions inside Tibet and on the borders of India steadily worsening during the latter half of 1910, as Minto's term as viceroy drew to a close, much diplomatic time began to be devoted to the problem of whether to encourage the Dalai Lama to return to Lhasa. The Chinese were now anxious for his return because they found themselves already unable to hold onto the territory they had seized only a few months earlier and felt that his presence in the capital would help them settle the country. With this in mind Lien Yu had sent his envoy, Lo Chang, to Darjeeling to talk with the Dalai Lama in an attempt to persuade him to return. Minto had been concerned by this development, particularly as shortly after Lo's arrival in India Lien Yu sent word that his envoy was to be elevated to the rank of special commissioner.

In Peking, chargés d'affaires Max-Muller was instructed to explain to the Wai Wu Pu that Britain would not recognise Lo Chang's new status.[27] In the event, British fears about Lo's mission proved groundless when, despite his status, the new special commissioner failed to make any headway with the Dalai Lama, a fact made very clear to them when the latter approached Bell for help. Lo himself then revealed that his mission had not been exactly like that described by Lien Yu in his original correspondence with Minto, the Chinese *amban* having apparently intimated that, if the Dalai Lama could be persuaded to return to Lhasa, he would have all his original powers and titles restored to him. By probing further Bell also discovered that Lo Chang was only empowered to offer what amounted to a guarantee of protection for the homeward journey, plus the right to continue living in his own Potala palace on a modest 'allowance' of 10,000 taels, to be paid to him by the Chinese government. The Tibetan ruler had been understandably unimpressed by these terms, which would have made him, once again, a helpless prisoner of the Chinese, and he had rejected them out of hand.

Lo had found Bell equally unsympathetic and, having failed to gain any support in Darjeeling, he announced his intention of visiting Simla in order to discuss the Chinese offer in more detail with the viceroy himself. Lord Minto was only too well aware that a similar tactic had been tried in

1906, when Chang Yin-tang had also attempted to negotiate with the viceroy directly. On that occasion an interview had been granted with the Indian foreign secretary, but Minto was now in no mood to offer a similar courtesy to Lo Chang who, before his promotion, had held a rank lower than that of tao tai. The new special commissioner was therefore offered a formal civic reception with only the possibility of an interview with the Indian foreign secretary, 'should he ever decide to visit Simla'.[28]

The situation then became even more intriguing when, during the course of an interview with British chargés d'affaires Max-Muller at the Wai Wu Pu, Grand Secretary Na'Tung firmly denied any knowledge of Lo Chang's promotion or of the plan to visit India, thus confirming what many had long suspected – namely, that Lien Yu had orchestrated the whole affair, once again acting without the official support of the Wai Wu Pu. From this point onwards the Indian government fully supported the Dalai Lama and began a long and sustained campaign for Lien Yu's removal from Lhasa on the grounds that his imperious attitude and unpredictable behaviour had destabilised the situation in Tibet. In the end the affair was satisfactorily concluded for India in November 1910 when Lo Chang was recalled to Peking before he could begin to prepare himself for the journey to Simla.[29]

There is no direct evidence that Peking was directly involved in any way with the Lo Chang mission, even though they would undoubtedly have benefited from its success; however, there is some evidence that the Wa Wu Pu did begin to explore other ways of persuading the Dalai Lama to return to Lhasa without success. After many months in India acquainting himself with western ideas and attitudes, the Tibetan ruler had acquired a sound understanding of his powerful bargaining position and was not so willing to respond to Chinese invitations as he had been in the past. In September 1910, for example, he had received a letter from the Panchen Lama purporting to be a plea for his return to Tibet, but accompanying it had been an oral message telling him to stay put and explaining that the letter had been written under duress. Since Tibetans trusted oral messages more than written ones, such a blatant Chinese attempt to influence the Dalai Lama by using the Panchen Lama in this way was doomed to failure.[30] A second Chinese scheme, this time employing the services of a delegation of Mongolian Buddhists who arrived in Yatung with the declared intention of delivering a similar message, was equally unsuccessful, on this occasion because the British trade agent at Yatung, David Macdonald, became suspicious of their claims to represent the 'peoples' of Mongolia. Mongolia was known to be driven apart by warring factions at the time and Macdonald could not believe that they would be able to present such a united front, even for the purpose of bringing the Dalai Lama home.[31]

Although the British had no wish to expose the Dalai Lama to exploitation by the Chinese, his continued presence in Darjeeling began to create

problems for the Indian government when he made it quite clear to them that he had no intention of returning to Lhasa without the full restoration of his powers and titles. It was true that British attitudes had changed towards him in the months before the Chinese revolution, and that by 1911 he was seen as the solution to frontier security rather than as the liability he had been when he first arrived in India less than two years earlier. Although still not entirely trusted by the British Foreign Office, he was now regarded by them as a strong ruler and one capable of restoring stability to Tibet. On the eve of the Chinese revolution, therefore, the governments of Britain, India and China were broadly united in their desire to see him return to Lhasa.[32]

Before the Dalai Lama could contemplate returning to his beleaguered capital, the revolution, which began in Wuchang in October 1911, transformed diplomatic relations, creating confusion and panic on the north-east frontier as well as inside the British Foreign Office. Chao Erh-Feng quickly lost contact with Peking and in the ensuing chaos many Chinese troops mutinied, having been stranded for months without pay or supplies in the isolated garrisons along the frontier and inside Tibet. In December of that year Chao himself was murdered by an angry mob in Chengdu and his death signalled the outbreak of open rebellion in East Tibet, with the area known as Hsiang Cheng completely breaking away from Chinese control.[33]

Chao's death was a severe blow to Chinese plans for the creation of Sikang, but it was not fatal. His successor was an energetic young Japanese-trained officer called Yin Ch'ang-heung who had proved more than able to continue the campaign; with the support of Hu Ching Yin, the military governor of Sichuan, he was able to relaunch the Chinese offensive in June 1912. This was done under the guise of despatching a peaceful mission of inquiry to Lhasa, the real aim of which was to recapture the territory lost to them in East Tibet and to retake Lhasa for the Sichuan government who, by now, were seeking total independence from Peking.[34]

The revolutionary disturbances in the Assam Himalayas had the unlikely effect of reducing tensions that had built up there since the events in Pome which had led to the humiliating withdrawal of Chinese troops from the area. The revolution also afforded the British an opportunity to restart negotiations with a new Republican government naturally at odds with the policies of the Manchu whom they had overthrown, even though many of its members had been involved in the plan to create Sikang.

Before any talks could go ahead, however, there were two worrying obstacles to progress that needed to be urgently addressed. The first was the widespread panic created by the remnants of the old Manchu armies, now murdering and looting their way across Tibet en route to join fellow soldiers at the Lhasa garrison. The second, more insidious problem, was created by the many refugees, including some European missionaries and

Chinese spies, who flocked to the trade marts at Gyantse and Yatung seeking British protection.[35] The effect of all this confusion on the trade marts was dramatic but short-lived. Soon after he took office in November 1911 Hardinge began to receive reports of fighting around the Marts but no news that British personnel had been directly involved. The serious threat to their security, which had appeared to come from the presence of so many refugees, had also been quickly resolved as their numbers dwindled and within a month Bell was reporting a return to relative normality.[36]

In Lhasa itself the effects were more far reaching. In December 1911 Chinese troops finally deposed Lien Yu, replacing him with their own general, Chung Ying. They had done this in an attempt to remove all traces of the old Manchu administration from the city, but the move proved a mistake when Chung Ying found himself unable to control the Tibetan population who believed that they had received instructions from the Dalai Lama himself to kill as many Chinese soldiers as possible, and although this was later strongly refuted it provided a powerful incentive to further violence. The situation was then complicated even more by the arrival of the many survivors of the Pome campaign who were set on looting and killing as many Tibetans as possible in an effort to exact revenge for the loss of face engendered by their undignified retreat from the area.[37]

Having discreetly fled the city soon after he had been deposed, Lien Yu found himself facing a dilemma, forced to decide whether to remain in the vicinity of Lhasa in the hope that events might soon right themselves, or return to Peking to face whatever fate might await him. He eventually settled upon the former course, remembering no doubt what had happened to others who had returned to China after failing in similar circumstances.[38]

By the beginning of May 1912 both sides in Lhasa had tired of fighting, and Chung Ying made it clear that his troops would welcome a ceasefire, a course which the Tibetans were now more than willing to consider. As well as the stress of battle, the clash between the great Lhasa monasteries of Drepung – historically favouring a more moderate attitude to the Chinese invaders – and Sera and Gandening – wanting to carry out the Dalai Lama's orders to the letter – threatened to tear Lhasa apart, setting Tibetans against each other in a fruitless struggle. After determined negotiation a temporary ceasefire was successfully arranged within days, but it was not until the following August that a lasting truce was effected with the help of Lal Bahadaur, the Nepalese representative in Lhasa.[39]

The difficulties involved in organising the safe evacuation of Chinese troops from Tibet, and the future administration of the country, now became a major priority which the Indian government solved by agreeing to allow Chinese troops to evacuate through India, a lengthy and painstaking process only finally completed at the end of 1912 and in spite of

Chung Ying's dogged resistance. The second and potentially more delicate problem of the Dalai Lama's return to Lhasa, and the future status of Tibet, postponed by the revolutionary disturbances, was less easy to address, mainly because the Tibetan ruler had finally decided to take matters into his own hands.[40]

By February 1912 the Dalai Lama was speaking openly of his earnest desire to return to his capital and had already moved his vast entourage to Kalimpong in order to be nearer the Indian border to await a suitable moment for his re-entry into Tibet.[41] During his period of exile in India he had written two letters to the Tsar. In December 1911, and after much prevarication and consultation with St Petersburg, Hardinge had allowed the Russians to send a reply directly to him in Darjeeling where, as a safety measure, Bell had acted as translator.[42] Rumours of his continuing association with Russia and his alleged preoccupation with a plan to revise the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907, coupled with the news that he had apparently issued orders for the Tibetans to kill Chinese soldiers in Lhasa, had tarnished the Dalai Lama's reputation, and apart from a handful of non-Tibetans attached to his entourage, which included Charles Bell and a Sikkimese agent known as Laden La, there were few non-Buddhists in India who still felt much sympathy for his plight.[43]

As well as bombarding Bell with requests for talks with Hardinge and with King George V on the subject of his return, the Dalai Lama had also sent his personal representative, Lonchen Shatra, to Calcutta with a letter for the Indian foreign secretary, Henry McMahon, containing a request for arms and a military escort for the return journey to Lhasa. Although a harmless request in itself, the letter also hinted that failure to comply would almost certainly result in a similar request being made to the Tsar. This implied threat, together with the Dalai Lama's obvious intention to return to his capital as soon as possible, stimulated debate in India about the best way to help him achieve his aim without engaging in conflict with Russia or China.[44]

As one who had served as British Ambassador to St Petersburg during the period of the Younghusband invasion, Hardinge was already sensitive to the implications posed by the Tibetan threat to involve Russia. He was therefore prepared to offer arms, escort and a guarantee of British support for the Dalai Lama after his return. Grey was unhappy about this, arguing that the terms of the Anglo-Russian Convention ruled out an Indian escort, but he was willing to send a 'message of goodwill' to the Tibetan ruler, together with the services of a native agent in lieu of an escort and as further evidence that the British government were supporting his return.[45]

The native agent selected for this purpose was none other than the Sikkimese police chief Laden La, a former Buddhist monk who spoke excellent Tibetan. He had been a member of the Younghusband expedition and was also one of the party who had accompanied the Panchen Lama to India in 1906. Grey hoped that Laden La's past diplomatic

experience, and his close proximity to the Dalai Lama during his exile in India, would provide him with the nearest equivalent to a Dorjiev which the British could muster. Laden La was known to have close ties with many Curzonians in India and it was presumed that, by now, he had enough personal influence with the Dalai Lama himself to promote British interests over those of Russia following the return to Tibet. Laden La was instructed by Hardinge to act as companion to the Dalai Lama on the journey home and, once inside Tibet, to help oversee the evacuation of those Chinese troops still remaining in the country and ensure that the temporary ceasefire in Lhasa became a permanent one.[46]

The Laden La mission, as it became known in India, was soon withdrawn by Grey on Crewe's advice when it was realised in London that the Russians might easily interpret this as an attempt to install a permanent British representative in Lhasa. Some embarrassment was then caused when it quickly became obvious to Grey that Hardinge had been so determined for the mission to go ahead that he had given permission for its departure before he had received confirmation of orders cancelling it from London. The British now faced a nasty dilemma. Having set off very promptly, the mission was by now quite close to Lhasa and, if recalled, would almost certainly be seen by the Chinese as evidence of British incompetence or, even worse, as an indication that it had been withdrawn for fear of Chinese retribution. Hardinge had delivered a *fait accompli*, and after lengthy discussion between London and India it was decided that Laden La should remain at Gyantse to act as a long-distance adviser to the Dalai Lama in Lhasa. It was a minor victory for the Curzonian camp and the beginning of a long association between Britain and Tibet.[47]

With the preparations for the Dalai Lama's return organised, Hardinge next faced the thorny problem of how to word the official farewell address from the Indian government without giving offence to Russia. In the message he had proposed to send he had planned to include a promise that India would 'welcome letters from the Dalai Lama in Lhasa' in order to 'ensure that the internal economy of Tibet was preserved from China'. Grey believed that this wording contravened both the Anglo-Russian Convention and the 1908 Trade Regulation Agreement, but Hardinge insisted that to send the Dalai Lama home without some British assurances would be equally disastrous for future frontier security since it would leave him vulnerable to Chinese interference and would almost certainly harm his chances of establishing a stable and independent administration in Tibet. After further discussion a compromise message was agreed, with the final wording expressing the desire of the British government to see the internal autonomy of Tibet maintained under Chinese suzerainty, but without Chinese interference, so long as the Dalai Lama was willing to uphold his country's treaty obligations with Britain and sustain friendly Anglo-Tibetan relations.[48] London was now a long way from non-involvement. Not only had Grey agreed, by implication, to protect Tibet in the event of

future Chinese aggression, but he had left an agent in Gyantse to monitor Tibetan affairs and had built upon the Dalai Lama's period in India to cement future Anglo-Tibetan relations.

The wrangles over the Dalai Lama's return to Tibet served to demonstrate even further the very different approaches to the problem adopted by the various branches of government in Britain and India. For the Foreign Office in London Tibet was but a small part of their wider Asian policy which aimed at the preservation of harmonious relations with both Russia and China. For the Indian government the Anglo-Russian Convention remained a frustrating obstacle to the important business of pacifying and consolidating the Indian frontier which, for them, had really begun when Younghusband had negotiated the Lhasa Convention in 1904 and which had since been seriously undermined the non-involvement policy pursued in London. Even Hardinge, whose very appointment as viceroy had been made in order to ensure that the London view prevailed in India, had soon found himself reluctant to leave Tibet to the mercies of the Chinese, particularly after the revolution, and had begun to promote policies that aimed to stabilise Tibet as a buffer against Chinese infiltration along India's extensive borders. While the Dalai Lama remained an unpredictable threat to Asian stability to the Foreign Office in London and the British legation in Peking, for the Indian government his return to Lhasa and, more significantly, the presence of Laden La at Gyantse, represented a triumph of common sense and a vindication of Curzonian forward policy.

The problem of whether to continue the non-involvement policy had ceased to be an issue with the Dalai Lama's return to Tibet and the Chinese withdrawal from the country during 1912, but the wider related problem of Anglo-Russian conflict remained to haunt Grey at the Foreign Office and was one that needed to be resolved if Britain and Russia were to co-exist in Central Asia.

In 1911 Anglo-Russian relations had started to improve. The decision made at the end of the year to allow the notes attached to the Anglo-Russian Convention banning frontier travel to lapse, and the friction created by the Kozlov expedition and other, less-publicised ventures, had faded. Even the Dalai Lama's attempts to contact the Tsar and involve Russia in his plans to return to Tibet had been put aside in the interests of Anglo-Russian harmony. This happy state of affairs did not last long and a serious threat to the stability of Anglo-Russian relations resurfaced in disagreement over Mongolia and the tendency for Russian diplomats to try to link this country's affairs with those of Tibet.

During December 1911, Sir George Buchanan, Britain's ambassador to St Petersburg, drew Grey's attention to two articles about Mongolia in the leading Russian newspaper *Vroe Vreyma*. The first article took the form of a reported conversation with a person described as a 'diplomat' who claimed that the Mongols, incensed and alarmed by China's treatment of

the Dalai Lama, were now working to establish their own independence. According to the author of this article they had already organised a strong freedom movement in northern Mongolia under the leadership of the Urga Bogdo who, in the absence of the Dalai Lama, had come to be regarded by the Chinese as the head of the Buddhist Church in Central Asia. The article went on to report the recent presence in St Petersburg of a Mongol deputation who had apparently travelled there to ask the Russians to protect their commercial resources. The significance of the article for Buchanan, however, lay in its concluding statement which emphasised the Dalai Lama's devotion to Russia and the fact that he had always 'sought close union with Mongolia', which seemed to him an obvious attempt to stake a Russian claim to Tibet. A second article in the same newspaper argued that the pull towards nationalism being felt by many of the states bordering the Chinese Empire made it now appropriate for China to recognise Mongolia as a new and an independent state.[49]

The level of concern generated by both articles in London was further intensified by intelligence reports of a meeting that had supposedly taken place at Phari in June 1912 between the Dalai Lama and Aghvan Dorjiev. This seemed to suggest that the Russians were taking advantage of the confusing situation on the fringes of the old Manchu Empire in order to pursue their own separate interests in Mongolia, Sinkiang, and possibly even in Tibet itself, and reports of disturbances in Sinkiang during the following August from the British consul in Kashgar seemed to confirm these suspicions.[50] In addition, the Chinese revolution had not only placed the status of Mongolia and Sinkiang in question but had opened an entire hornets' nest of issues between China and her neighbours in Central Asia as treaties previously signed with the Manchu now seemed invalid.

The implications of these new developments for frontier security, as well as for Anglo-Russian relations, were potentially catastrophic, especially after Mongolia declared independence in December 1911, announcing at the same time that Chinese interests in Mongolia were now abolished. It was now very clear to Grey that most of the information contained in the Russian newspaper articles had been accurate and that the new Mongolian government had indeed turned to Russia for support and protection. In late 1912 London finally received news of a formal treaty signed between Mongolia and Russia under which the latter had been granted substantial commercial and political rights in Mongolia, as well as permission to advise in foreign policy matters.[51]

In the light of these events the need to revise some of the terms of the Anglo-Russian Convention became a matter of pressing concern to Britain and Russia. The Russian foreign minister, Sergei Sazanov, had already visited London in September 1912 and, at a private interview at Balmoral Castle, had informed Grey that Russia no longer wished to regard British interests in Tibet as a suitable or equal exchange for Russian interests in Mongolia. At a second private interview with Lord Crewe, he stated that

'the Russian people would not tolerate any alteration of the situation in Tibet', and that as far as his government were concerned, a much better exchange for Mongolia would be Afghanistan. For Grey this suggestion was quite out of the question. One of the original aims of the Anglo-Russian Convention had been to try to prevent further development of Russian interest in Central Asia, and the issues surrounding Afghanistan had been considered more difficult to solve than those surrounding Russian interest in Tibet. When Sazanov persisted in trying to move on Afghanistan, therefore, Grey refused to budge, with the result that Anglo-Russian talks about Tibet were deferred until 1917, leaving Britain free to pursue an independent Tibetan policy for a further five years.[52]

The problem created by the continuing Russian interest in Mongolia remained, and the close ties between Tibet and Mongolia, reaffirmed by news of a Tibeto-Mongolian treaty in January 1913, caused Grey fresh concern. Following Mongolia's lead, in October 1912 the Lhasa authorities had formally broken all ties with China and declared their independence soon after the Dalai Lama returned to Tibet.[53] What worried Grey far more than these developments, however, were persistent rumours that Dorjiev had represented the Dalai Lama during the negotiations for the Tibeto-Mongolian Treaty, each side signing as independent sovereign states. Dorjiev had then apparently returned immediately to St Petersburg after the treaty had been concluded, presumably to report the details to the Tsar. Although the Dalai Lama's own official representative, Lonchen Shatra, subsequently denied that Dorjiev had been present at the signing or involved in the preceding negotiations, the Russian connection had been reinforced by the presence of a Mongolian delegation in St Petersburg, whose arrival appeared to coincide with Dorjiev's own return to the city.[54]

Although Sazanov was later able to convince Grey that Russia believed the treaty to be a fiction, suspicions of Russian involvement with Tibet lingered and were compounded by reports that the Russians were supplying Lhasa with Winchester rifles, via their new agents in Urga, and that Russian officers were also helping to train a new Mongolian army. As it was also known to British intelligence that two Russian Buriats, trained in Urga as consular officials, had been posted close to the Tibetan border at Sining, and were providing Russia with a direct line to Lhasa, Grey decided that the true extent of Russian involvement in Mongolia and Tibet would need to be established; but he was faced with the problem of how to do this when all direct attempts to settle the difficulty with Russia diplomatically had failed.[55]

Although only indirectly involving Tibet itself, the pattern of Anglo-Russian rivalry in Central Asia had eventually come to be dominated by the Tibetan issue. In many ways the tensions that the Anglo-Russian Convention had set out to solve had served only to generate fresh confusions and misunderstandings between the two countries and make what the

British increasingly referred to as their 'Tibetan Problem', much more complicated as time went on and as Chinese claims to Tibet became more focused. To British eyes it seemed that the only possible way forward was to organise a treaty which would settle once and for all the issue of Tibet's status under international law, and it was in this way that the idea for the Simla Conference was born.

6 The Simla Conference and the bipartite settlement, 1912–1914

> I hope he [McMahon] will get his rug in the long run, though the discussions have been complicated by the Tibetans having a rug of their own which they also try to sell exorbitantly.
>
> Lord Crewe to Lord Hardinge, May 1914

On 16 March 1912 Yuan Shih Kai became president of a new Chinese Republican government in Peking, ushering in a period of closer co-operation between China and the western powers and increasing the personal power of Sir John Jordan in Peking who, since February 1911 had been doyen of the foreign legations in Peking and who was already known to the new president.[1]

Jordan and his colleagues had welcomed Yuan's presidency as a means of easing existing Anglo-Chinese tensions in general, believing that his influence might bring about greater opportunities for talks with China on a number of issues, including the status of Tibet. This initial optimism soon proved unfounded, for the change to Republican government had little effect on China's main Asian policy, which had serious implications for Tibet. Yuan continued to hold onto territories in Mongolia, Sinkiang and Tibet acquired under the Manchu, but the forward policy in Tibet – and more particularly the plan to create Sikang – had not been a Manchu initiative, the main driving force behind this having come from the provincial government of Sichuan. Yuan had many supporters in Sichuan who had been prepared to defy the Manchu in order to implement this policy and who were now anxious to see it carried out when he became president. The resulting dramatic changes in policy, which at first appeared to British eyes to be an unexpected departure, were in reality merely extensions of policies already begun in Sichuan in the dying days of the Manchu dynasty.[2]

New Republican policy was most obviously reflected in the 'Five Races Decree' of May 1912. This decree was portrayed as an attempt to enhance the status of peoples, previously regarded under the Manchu as subject races of China, by declaring them Chinese citizens. As one of the five races covered by the decree Tibetans now had the right to some

representation in the new Republican assembly in Peking, but this was a double-edged sword the implications of which were not lost on Grey, who realised that in exchange for these democratic privileges China now intended to claim Tibet as part of China proper.[3]

A second, less obvious manifestation of the new approach lay in the appointment of Yuan's close associate, Lu Hsung-Chi, as 'pacificator of Tibet' at the beginning of 1913. Although his new title was presented as simply the Republican equivalent of the Manchu *amban*, Jordan quickly appreciated that Lu was set to play an even more demanding role. He already knew that this official, now based in Calcutta, had been secretly engaged in promoting ties with the Tibetans throughout the lengthy period of the Chinese evacuation during 1912, but it now became clear to Jordan that his new role was to develop this work by fronting a more humane policy, and by opening a dialogue with the Dalai Lama about proposals to revise the status of Tibet within the framework of the new republic. In order to do this, however, Lu had to persuade both the Dalai Lama and the Indian government to allow him into Tibet, a move that was proving understandably difficult.[4]

Yuan had not expected his new policy to sour his friendly relations with Britain and he now added their increasing hostility to the many other problems which affected his first year as president. His greatest and most immediate problem was how best to hold together the disparate provinces of the old Manchu Empire, now jealously guarding their new-found independence, which had been strengthened by the breakdown of communications with Peking and was one of the more dramatic consequences of the revolutionary struggle.[5] Yuan was not helped in solving this problem by his political background, his rise to power having been accomplished by luck and by his ability to survive court intrigue, skills that did not provide the kind of experience necessary to run the new Chinese Republic. His popularity with sinophiles like Jordan and George Morrison (the influential correspondent for *The Times* newspaper in London who, in 1912, resigned his post to become one of Yuan's special international advisers), was based upon a conviction that the new president would try to restore China to her past greatness. However, their confidence in his ability to do this was not shared outside China, and certainly not by Grey or by Hardinge who saw the new Republic as an unstable and untrustworthy left-wing force with which they could not hope to negotiate. They regarded Yuan's new approach, epitomised by the 'Five Races Decree', as an illegal attempt to intervene in the internal affairs of Tibet, as well as a deliberate strategy aimed at overturning all previous treaties negotiated between Britain and the Manchu. For their part the Chinese were incensed by Grey's apparent determination to link the issue of Tibetan status to that of granting formal recognition to the new Republic, and this began to dominate Anglo-Chinese discussions in the months that followed the issuing of the Five Races Decree.[6]

Meanwhile, in Tibet itself, the problems of the new Republican regime were viewed with mild amusement. Following the collapse of the Manchu dynasty in October 1911 Tibetans had considered themselves more or less freed from all ties with China. The *chö-yön* had bound only the Dalai Lama to the Manchu emperor, and the formal declaration of Tibetan independence in 1912 was simply a recognition of the fact that, with the passing of the Manchu, China had no longer any right to intervene in Tibetan affairs at any level. Yuan himself had come to the presidency fully prepared to restore full powers and titles to the Dalai Lama. He also believed that the Five Races Decree could only help Tibet by elevating their status and including them in the new republic as Chinese citizens. To demonstrate his goodwill he had even recalled his Chinese commander from East Tibet and had begun to dismantle Chinese installations in those parts of East Tibet occupied by Chinese troops. His ability to control troop movements from far away in Peking had proved more difficult than he could ever have anticipated however, because the areas in question were, by this time, under the direct control of the virtually independent provincial governments of Sichuan and Yunnan and, in the end, the most he was able to do was to attempt to halt any further advance of Chinese forces. Meanwhile his efforts to diffuse the situation in East Tibet were treated with some scepticism in London and India where it was felt that these were simply moves taken as one stage in a pre-arranged plan aimed at a second military takeover in Tibet.[7]

Instead of calming tensions Yuan had succeeded only in exacerbating them, and even greater complications arose when, in return for promises to reinstate the Dalai Lama, he began to claim 'sovereign rights' to Tibet, a move which marked the revival of the fierce semantic debate which had been one of the great stumbling blocks of the adhesion treaty talks of 1906. The British Foreign Office had previously accepted that China had 'suzerain' rights in Tibet, but India had continued strenuously to reject any Chinese claims to the country. By 1912 it had become clear to Hardinge that, unless he was prepared to compromise, there could be no possibility of settling the Tibetan problem with China and therefore no chance of stabilising the north-east frontier. Chinese interest in Bhutan, Sikkim and Nepal in pre-revolutionary times had interfered with Indian plans to establish a protectorate over the Himalayan states and there seemed to be no other effective means of keeping the Chinese away from would-be Indian territory than by settling with her over Tibet.[8]

Although London and India were now broadly united in favour of setting up a conference to discuss Tibet, the main barrier to progress was Yuan's obvious inability to control both his own Republican government in Peking and the provincial governments of Sichuan and Yunnan, which were keen to continue the Chao offensive. To this end the Sichuan government had sent their own expedition to Tibet which had set out in

April 1912. From this time on, a race began between India and Peking aimed at organising the conference before this expedition reached Lhasa, any Republican prevarication being interpreted in India as yet more evidence of Yuan's attempt to stall talks until the expedition achieved its goal.[9]

The extent to which Yuan really was involved in what Hardinge believed was a plot to reinvade Lhasa is unclear. In the past he had often openly disowned the forward movement in Tibet and it was obviously not in his own interests to give more power to the Sichuanese government, which already exercised too much influence in East Tibet. Within British ranks there were strong divisions between those in India advocating the use of force against the Sichuanese and the more diplomatic approach recommended by Jordan who, having a much greater appreciation of Yuan's predicament than Hardinge, understood that there was nothing to be gained by any direct challenge to his authority at such a critical time.[10]

Jordan was totally opposed to Crewe's suggestion that a British force should be stationed somewhere between the East Tibetan frontier and the British administrative post at Sadiya in Assam to halt any Chinese advance, because he believed it was a great mistake to try to link Tibetan frontier problems to those of upper Burma, especially when Yunnanese troops continued to threaten the Burmese border.

In the event Jordan's ideas proved more attractive to Grey and on 12 August 1912 he delivered a memo to the newly formed Wai Chaio Pu containing Britain's terms for settling the problem of Tibet's status. Jordan had won the case for a diplomatic settlement, but he had done so at great personal cost. Hardinge came to resent deeply what he perceived as the British minister's intrusion into matters which he regarded as purely Indian, and from this time on he began to question Jordan's ability to act in the best interests of Britain, often accusing him, quite unfairly, of identifying himself too closely with Yuan Shih Kai.[11]

The ambitious document which Jordan presented to the Wai Chaio Pu in August 1912, and referred to by the British as the August Memorandum, sought to establish guidelines for a permanent Anglo-Chinese understanding about Tibet. Couched in firm and unambiguous language which hoped to make it quite clear to the Chinese that Britain would not tolerate any action which might threaten the independence of Tibet, it described the despatch of the Sichuan expedition in the same year as an act of aggression. The Memorandum is significant because it marked a complete departure in London's attitude towards China. It displayed undisguised disapproval of the Republic's Five Races Decree and called for the status of Tibet to be reinstated in accordance with the terms of the Lhasa Convention of 1904 and the Chinese adhesion treaty of 1906. It condemned the actions of Chinese officials inside Tibet who had contravened these treaties and, whilst acknowledging the Republican government's right to station a permanent representative in Lhasa, it

recommended that the size of his escort should be substantially reduced. While stressing the importance of maintaining 'friendly negotiations', implicit within the Memorandum was the strong suggestion that if its instructions were not adhered to then Britain would be unwilling to acknowledge the legality of the new Republic.[12]

The Wai Chaio Pu responded by simply ignoring the document, in much the same way as their Manchu predecessors had done when confronted with similar ultimatums from the British, and Grey was now faced with the problem of how to proceed. The impasse was finally broken when Jordan received an unexpected invitation for talks at the Wai Chaio Pu from Dr Yen, vice-foreign minister and leader of the powerful Young China Party who, amongst other things, had been primarily responsible for the modernisation of Chinese diplomatic practice which had led to the creation of the Wai Chaio Pu.[13]

The interview with Yen, which took place on 14 December 1912, was very revealing, demonstrating to Jordan the true extent of Yuan's weakness and his distance from the real source of power in the Republic. Yen made it clear to Jordan from the start that his plan was not only to resist any attempt to force the Chinese to surrender any of their recent gains in Tibet, but that it was also his intention to extend Chao's colonisation programme in East Tibet. In response to accusations from Jordan that China was behaving aggressively in East Tibet, Yen replied that he regarded the British closure of the Indian border with Tibet as a hostile act and as a sign that the Indian government were no longer prepared to offer the same degree of hospitality towards China which they had recently shown in allowing the gradual evacuation of Chinese troops through their territory. Unable to counter this Jordan was forced to end the interview at this point, and a formal Chinese rejection of the August Memorandum quickly followed. To his intense irritation the Chinese then completely misrepresented his conversation with Yen by claiming that he had expressed sympathy for the Five Races Decree, an aspect of Yuan's policy which he personally found particularly abhorrent.[14]

By 1912 a new British policy towards Tibet had thus taken shape, and in early 1913 the Indian government had drawn up a draft agreement which they hoped might form the basis of the treaty which they wanted China to sign. Jordan believed that if talks with China were to go ahead at all in the present volatile climate they needed to be pressed forward as quickly as possible, and certainly before the Chinese had a chance to consolidate their advances in East Tibet. In spite of continuing criticism from India that Jordan's fondness for Yuan, and the overwhelming pressure that his post now demanded, meant that he was losing touch with the real situation in China, his opinions still carried much weight with Grey, and his view once again prevailed. Jordan was able to play a key role in setting up the Simla Conference of 1913, and it was his idea for a tripartite dialogue between Britain, China and Tibet (based upon the precedent he set

during the trade regulation talks in 1908), that was the option finally adopted as the conference format.[15]

The idea behind the tripartite talks was that India might be able to act as a 'benevolent assistant' in negotiations between China and Tibet. It was hoped that this approach might have the effect of relieving Britain of some of the problems involved in negotiating a separate treaty with Tibet, which they would then have to persuade the Chinese to sign and which had created so many difficulties on a previous occasion when the Chinese had prevaricated for nearly two years before signing the adhesion treaty in 1906.

Although initially sceptical about the chances of a successful conclusion to any discussions with China over Tibet, Hardinge was happy with Jordan's idea for tripartite talks, seeing them as a more natural development as well as a better opportunity to secure India's borders. Before the talks could begin, however, the Chinese indicated that they preferred a bipartite treaty, refusing to even consider the possibility of including Tibet, over which they insisted they had sovereign status. As a softener, they offered Wen Tsung-Yao as their delegate to the conference. Wen had formerly been assistant *amban* in Lhasa during 1910 and was known to be sympathetic to the Tibetans, but when this and a subsequent attempt to install the notorious Chang Yin-tang as delegate also failed to satisfy the British it looked as though the talks might fall at the first hurdle. In the event, and in consultation with Jordan, agreement was reached over the appointment of Ivan Chen, a diplomat with considerable British experience, as China's chief delegate to the conference.[16]

Chen's appointment, which at first had seemed so appropriate, now threatened to jeopardise the start of the talks when reports began to be received in London that he had also been named as one of two new 'pacificators for Tibet'. Crewe was particularly disturbed by rumours that the pacificators were already in East Tibet and were engaged in negotiations for a quite separate treaty with the East Tibetans. Since the title of 'pacificator', like that of *amban* under the Manchu, was applied only to officials working in Chinese dependencies, this information had obvious implications for Yuan's sincerity as well as for Jordan's competence. The rumours of the separate treaty could not be confirmed, but they raised doubts about the viability of a tripartite conference in such circumstances since Yuan had previously promised to halt all Chinese activity in East Tibet, both before and for the duration of the talks. The situation on the eve of Jordan's leave looked ominous.[17]

In June 1913 Sir Beilby Alston became chargé d'affaires in Peking. Already well acquainted with the very delicate state of Anglo-Chinese relations, Alston nevertheless failed to understand the true extent of Yuan's plight as Jordan had done, and he tended to follow the Foreign Office line that Yuan had more influence in East Tibet than he purported. In ignorance of the true state of affairs, therefore, Alston was inclined to take

a much firmer line with the Republic, and he warned Yuan that unless Chinese activity ceased in East Tibet there could be no further dialogue with China. Although this seemed to produce the right results in that it prompted Yuan to reissue orders for all activity in East Tibet to cease, at best this could only be a token gesture on Yuan's part, and British hopes were once again dashed when Ivan Chen arrived in Peking with fresh proposals for the format of the talks which they could not possibly accept. This move delayed the start of the Simla Conference for another fortnight, giving yet more ammunition to Jordan's critics who now argued that his soft approach to Yuan had been the main reason behind Chinese prevarication.[18]

The controversy surrounding the organisation of the Simla Conference in itself reveals the true complexity of Britain's relations with the new Chinese Republic. There was still some confusion about the role played by Yuan in determining and directing policy outside Peking, and this had led to much unfounded criticism of Jordan's handling of the situation. In reality Yuan could do little to control what was happening in East Tibet; neither could he reveal the true extent of his weakness. The result was that his attitude could easily appear to outsiders to be inconsistent and even insincere. Ironically, the attempts to establish the new Chinese province of Sikang, which he himself had previously supported, could now only serve to undermine his position as president since the new province would almost certainly become a future power base for the Sichuanese government, allowing them to extend their influence across the whole of western China at his expense. This situation, aided and abetted by a historical predilection for informal Chinese control in some parts of East Tibet, had made the people there antagonistic towards what they saw as dictatorship from Lhasa.

The situation on the eve of the Simla Conference was therefore complicated by a number of factors which mitigated against its success, even though – it seemed to the British at least – they had gone to great lengths to ensure that the Tibetans themselves were at last going to be offered a real stake in their own future.

Ivan Chen's arrival in Simla in early October 1913 was greeted by the Indian government with a mixture of resentment and relief since it was now possible for talks finally to go ahead after what seemed to them to be months of Chinese procrastination.[19] Chen had brought a strong team with him to Simla. These included his Chinese secretary, Mr T.H. Shah, his Tibetan interpreter, Mr T.C. Wang and his English interpreter, Mr B.D. Bruce, an employee of the Chinese Customs Service. The Indian government objected to Bruce's appointment, based on their past experience of the obstructive attitude of some of its members towards Indian personnel in Tibet, and their strong protests led to his removal before the conference began.[20]

The British hoped that Chen's familiarity with western diplomatic prac-

tice would allow the talks to proceed without the misunderstandings that had dogged all previous negotiations with China on the subject of Tibet. Despite this optimistic beginning, however, Chen's experiences at Simla would not be happy ones. As he frequently complained in numerous letters to his close friend and confidant, George Morrison, now an employee of the Republican government in Peking, he felt throughout the whole period of the conference that he was working alone in very trying circumstances. Firstly, this was because his reports to Peking had to include translations of English legal terms and concepts with which the Chinese were quite unfamiliar. Secondly, although Chen himself spoke excellent English, the removal of Bruce now meant that he had to wade through a vast amount of conference paperwork virtually single-handed. Thirdly, he had clearly been poorly briefed and had not been provided with the kind of detailed evidence he needed in order to promote Chinese claims to Tibet effectively. Finally, the additional and unexpected presence of Lu Hsing Chi – in Simla to try to organise a separate deal with the Dalai Lama – was a positive hindrance to his progress, especially as the details of Lu's Mission had not been fully revealed to him.[21]

Facing Chen across the conference table in October 1913 was Sir Henry McMahon, a man of formidable expertise and experience who had already made an exhaustive study of the Tibetan situation and who was determined to conclude the conference in India's favour by delimiting Tibet's borders and establishing her international status once and for all.[22] For Chen, the Tibetan delegate Lonchen Shatra may have seemed to present less of a threat, especially as Lu had managed to bribe an official in the Tibetan party, but it soon became obvious that appearances were deceptive and that, despite these precautions, the Tibetans were going to be a real force in Simla. At the first session of the conference Chen noted that Lonchen Shatra was working closely with the British delegates, who seemed to know him and were aware of his status as a high-ranking Tibetan aristocrat. His own chances of exercising any influence over the Tibetan delegate were further dashed by the discovery that Lonchen Shatra harboured a personal grudge against the vanquished Lhasa *amban,* Lien Yu. The latter had apparently taken advantage of the unique opportunity afforded by Lonchen Shatra's extended absence in India with the Dalai Lama in order to move into his house, and when he eventually fled Lhasa in 1912 he had taken with him most of the household contents and valuables.[23]

Unlike Chen, Lonchen Shatra had an extensive knowledge of the geography of the north-east frontier and the history of Sino-Tibetan relations, and before coming to the Conference, and with the help of Charles Bell, he had amassed a vast collection of documents relating to the various territories which the Chinese had periodically occupied but which had always later reverted to Tibet. The information which the Tibetans were able to present to the conference was therefore very impressive, both in

bulk and depth. By contrast Chen was ill-equipped, having at his disposal only the details of Chao's most recent campaigns with which to contest the Tibetan delegate's weighty evidence.[24]

Besides McMahon, the British delegation included Charles Bell, as his Tibetan adviser, and Archibald Rose of the China Consular Service as his adviser on Chinese matters. Unlike Chen, the British team had been well briefed and had a very clear idea of what they wanted from the talks and the way in which they proposed to get it. This was partly because the idea for the conference had come from Britain, and partly because Chinese and Tibetan claims seemed to them to be at once unrealistic and incompatible. These factors allowed McMahon to establish himself as a mediator very early on and, once elected conference president, he proceeded to throw himself enthusiastically into the task of finding a rational solution which he hoped all sides could accept.[25]

Although the conference met for six sessions over the next six months, by April 1914 McMahon was forced to concede failure to reach any agreement. The detailed Tibetan claims had been well prepared and were presented even before the first session, clearly under the assumption that they would be automatically supported by Britain. The Dalai Lama had ordered his delegate to be firm in upholding all Tibetan claims and in particular to request that China acknowledge his power as ruler of Tibet and return to him all Tibetan land taken by Chao's forces. Lonchen Shatra quickly realised, however, that McMahon was following an agenda of his own and had no intention of supporting all of these demands, which would have given everything to Tibet at China's expense; but he also understood that the counter-claims which Chen had presented were similarly unacceptable to the British.[26]

The Chinese appeared to want to establish an active presence inside Tibet as well as retaining a permanent representative in Lhasa, and they made it very clear that it was of immense psychological and political importance to Yen's Young China Party – the main driving force behind these proposals – to ensure that Chao's gains should not be lost to China. As well as pressing for a permanent representative in Lhasa, therefore, they were keen to retain the East Tibetan states of Batang, Litang and Chamdo which Chao had taken in 1910. Although they had stopped short of demanding full sovereignty over Tibet, their insistence on the maintenance of a loose network of officials inside the country, together with the right to control the main routes to Lhasa, threw out ominous signals to McMahon that, given the opportunity, the Chinese intended to exploit these advantages in order to re-invade Lhasa.[27]

Rumours reaching Simla of a resumption of hostilities in East Tibet, together with reliable confirmation that a deal had been successfully struck between the Kalon Lama, leader of the Tibetan forces, and the Chinese commander-in-chief, seemed only to confirm his suspicions, making it very difficult for either the Tibetans or the British delegates to

accept the sincerity of Chen's proposals. The attitude of mistrust which permeated the discussions thus became a real obstacle to progress, and when the first stage of the conference collapsed in April 1914 it came as no great surprise to any of the participants.[28]

McMahon's idea had been to divide Tibet into inner and outer zones. The outer zone would place an area west of the historic Yangtse river frontier under Tibetan jurisdiction where there could be no Chinese interference of any kind. The inner zone would extend eastwards to the borders of Kansu and Sichuan, where the population was predominantly Tibetan. Here China could station their officials and call in troops in times of crisis as in the past, but they would not be able to colonise the area or attempt to claim it as part of China proper.[29]

What seemed to McMahon and his British colleagues to present a neat and sensible solution, however, provoked fury from both the Tibetans and the Chinese who felt equally betrayed. In Peking Jordan was scathing in his condemnation of McMahon's proposal, attacking it as highly unstable in view of Yuan's weak political position. For the Tibetans there could be no acceptance of any solution which effectively rendered large parts of East Tibet helpless in the face of future Chinese aggression, and which even threatened Lhasa itself since mere promises by the Chinese not to try to re-invade the city could hardly be taken on trust.[30]

Despite these powerful protests McMahon's draft treaty was pushed through and was put to the conference in April 1914. By this time the Tibetans had been persuaded to sign, Lonchen Shatra having been made aware that there would be no further British concessions and no additional support for Tibet if he refused. After a period of reflection Chen had also agreed to initial the document, but only on the clear understanding that he had not formally signed it. The resulting crisis generated by Chen's decision to initial and not sign was exacerbated by a strongly worded rebuttal of his actions from Peking, which arrived in Simla on the following day. Chen himself was clearly mystified by the force of this response and, in an attempt to save face, he tried to argue that there had been some 'misapprehension' of his actions, due to the 'impossibility of correctly expressing in Chinese what the act of initialling means'.[31]

Suggestions made after the event that Chen, who was obviously keen to make a success of the conference, was in fact being intimidated by McMahon seem improbable. It is far more likely that in making this distinction between initialling and signing Chen was simply stalling for time while waiting for instructions from Peking.[32] Once the criticism of his actions had been received in Simla, however, Chen was forced to accept the reality of his position. He was nothing more than a token delegate, and the powers that be in Peking had never had any intention of signing the tripartite document. From now on he lost all credibility as China's representative and, though Morrison continued to defend him from Peking, Jordan was less sympathetic. The general consensus in the British

legation was that Chen had been 'coerced' into initialling, either by McMahon or by his own government.[33]

McMahon himself was quite taken aback by the speed and the hostility of the Chinese response, and when Chen asked him for advice on what reply he should give he could provide none. This negative attitude towards Chen in itself reflects the very wide gap in communication between the India camp – so secure in the belief that they had proceeded calmly, sensibly and reasonably in attempting to organise the complex situation in terms acceptable to both sides – and the Chinese government which, divided, seemed to view the conference as a chance to play for time while continuing their military campaign in East Tibet.[34]

In this increasingly desperate situation, the Tibetans did what they could to placate both sides by negotiating with Lu in Simla and with the Chinese in East Tibet. They did this throughout the entire course of the conference, while continuing their efforts through Lonchen Shatra to try to convince Hardinge that they needed British support.[35]

The Simla Conference is generally regarded as a failure because it did not result in the conclusion of a tripartite treaty, but this analysis is based very much on a British view of events and the conference can only really be assessed in terms of what all three participants hoped to achieve. For the Chinese Simla had never been a serious initiative, merely a holding operation aimed at keeping Yuan's government afloat in difficult circumstances. Although the president himself subsequently expressed a keen interest in securing a settlement of the Tibetan situation, his ability to effect any kind of compromise compatible with the aspirations of the powerful Young China Party was never a realistic possibility. Without adequate backup the unfortunate Chen was left to the mercy of fellow negotiators and he lingered on in Simla trying to re-establish some kind of understanding with the British for months after the conference ended. When he did eventually return to Peking during the summer of 1914, he faded into relative obscurity, ironically meeting much the same fate as his Tibetan counterpart who had also been rendered virtually redundant during the course of the discussions by his government's refusal to compromise and by accusations that he had been too friendly with the British.[36]

Of the three chief delegates only McMahon was able to continue with a successful political career. His solution to the 'Tibetan problem' was greeted as a triumph in India, where the conference was now seen as a means of gaining much of what Curzon had wanted when Younghusband set out in 1903 by securing a bipartite agreement with Tibet after the tripartite talks had failed. The Conference did result in some indirect gains for China in that they were able to use the breathing space afforded to secure a truce in East Tibet, an initiative orchestrated by the Young China Party over which Yuan still had no control. For the Chinese president, heavily in debt throughout the course of the negotiations and fearful for

his own political future, the Simla talks had proved a nightmare. Jordan had made no secret of his belief in Yuan's inability to control events in East Tibet or of his conviction that he was too weak to organise a compromise. In private discussions with Jordan the president had consistently invoked China's ancient connections with the conquered territories of Litang and Batang in East Tibet, and as a result Jordan was persuaded that China might have a legitimate claim to these states. In the light of what seemed to them to be convincing evidence, therefore, Jordan (in Peking) and Langley (at the Far Eastern Department in London) became highly critical of what they considered to be McMahon's failure to see any merit in China's case. Jordan summed up the feelings of the China Service at the time by describing the sense of unreality which they felt had surrounded the proceedings at Simla, and their belief that not only had the Chinese and Tibetan governments known each other's cards throughout but that Chen had allowed himself to come too far under McMahon's influence.[37]

In his correspondence with Langley Jordan he did not bother to disguise his contempt for the Indian government's obsolete methods. He was clearly irritated by the tortuous procedures which he and his colleagues had been forced to monitor, with increasing frustration, from Peking, and long after the conference had ended he continued to rail against their poor handling of the negotiations. He was particularly vitriolic about what he believed to have been their ineptitude in failing to negotiate a deal with Yuan while the latter was still well disposed towards Britain, and while China might still have considered signing the treaty in exchange for control of Kokonor. In Jordan's opinion McMahon's high-handed behaviour at Simla had served only to confirm his conviction, formed during the days of the Pienma crisis in 1911, that the Indian government were not equipped to deal with the sensitive issue of Tibetan status, a judgement that would soon have implications for Britain's Tibetan policy in 1916 when Jordan took advantage of Foreign Office preoccupation with the war in Europe in order to try to tackle the problem of East Tibet himself.[38]

In India Lord Hardinge had watched the slow disintegration of the Simla talks with a heavy heart and had become increasingly pessimistic about the chances of achieving a tripartite settlement as time wore on. He believed that India had already gained a great deal in securing an agreement for a permanent British representative and escort in Lhasa, which had been one of their main objectives, but he strongly suspected that Jordan had not done enough to persuade the Chinese to sign and complained that India had again been made a 'cat's-paw' for the sake of British commercial success in China.[39] He welcomed Yuan's move to close Sino-Tibetan negotiations in East Tibet in July 1914 as the best way of pulling China into line, but blamed Jordan for what he considered to be an excessive delay in getting him to do this, accusing the British minister of giving Yuan the impression that Britain might be prepared to modify her demands.[40]

In an attempt to try to remedy the situation, and in the lull before delegates left Simla during the summer of 1914, Hardinge seized the opportunity to sign the bipartite treaty with Tibet under which India was able to secure not only a large portion of the unprotected border running from Bhutan to Assam but was also provided with a convenient excuse to revise the Trade Regulation Treaty of 1908, this having been a constant source of aggravation to British trade agents since it had been signed.[41]

The frontier between Assam and Burma, stabilised by the new British policy of loose political control, was now paying dividends for India by providing them with a new frontier of 'great richness and wealth'.[42] The Lhasa authorities were still very unhappy about the terms contained in the Simla draft treaty, which they felt that they had been virtually blackmailed into signing, but they were also divided amongst themselves because under McMahon's proposals they were set to lose the important fertile regions of Nyarong and Derge in East Tibet, as well as the whole of Tawang.

The Tibetans had approached the Simla Conference with an expectation that, at last, their point of view would be appreciated by the British, and they had been sadly disappointed at finding themselves, yet again, a mere pawn in Anglo-Chinese relations. At the heart of the problem lay a fundamental misunderstanding between Yuan's Republic and the government of India about the past nature of Sino-Tibetan relations and of the spiritual and temporal divide which allowed the Dalai Lama to exercise varying degrees of control and influence from region to region across Tibet. The Tibetans were particularly dismayed by the loss of Tawang, for example, where the Dalai Lama's powerful influence had enabled them to enjoy safe passage and trading rights without interference from the often hostile tribes who lived there. The Chinese presence had not only destabilised the area but had also antagonised many of them, causing some to question the Dalai Lama's authority. Once the Simla talks had collapsed and the Chinese had refused to sign, the Tibetans were left with a dilemma, forced to decide whether to risk reprisals from the Chinese by signing a separate bipartite agreement with the British, which could guarantee them British friendship and protection, or to refuse and risk losing British support entirely.[43]

On 3 July 1914 the Dalai Lama eventually decided to sign the bipartite treaty and, once signed, copies of the initialled but unratified Simla treaty were attached to the document. Both parties then agreed upon and signed a new Tibetan trade agreement to replace the trade regulation agreements of 1893 and 1908. By completely removing the Chinese presence at the trade marts inside Tibet, believed by the British to have been the main cause of past friction, this new trade agreement effectively gave India what she needed in order to develop her trading and commercial interests in Tibet but gave Tibet very little in the way of real protection against future Chinese aggression. The Dalai Lama was now so anxious to

secure positive British aid for his country that he had given Charles Bell to understand that he also wished to develop the potentially lucrative gold, silver and metal mining industries which Indian entrepreneurs had coveted for so long, but Bell could give him no hard evidence of British intentions to help beyond vague promises of support in the event of further Chinese interference in the internal affairs of his country.[44]

Within the bipartite treaty there was a further clause relating to the troublesome Bhutan/Assam borders which allowed India to move her frontier from the crests of the Himalayan foothills, extending it to run from Kashmir to Assam. By doing this India had achieved one of the major objectives voiced by McMahon at the start of the Simla Conference, but under this arrangement she had acquired Tawang, adding 200 square miles of buffer zone along her northern frontier between Assam and Tibet. The bipartite agreement also favoured India by binding Tibet to the terms of the original Simla draft, while at the same time robbing the Chinese of the benefits to which she would have been entitled had she signed it. Tibet now agreed, for example, to uphold Article 4 of the Lhasa Convention of 1904, which prevented her from levying tariffs and taxes without permission; but since Article 3 of the Chinese adhesion treaty of 1906 was now rendered invalid by China's failure to sign the Simla draft, she no longer retained equal rights to station her trade agents at the Tibetan trade marts. This meant that India was able to enjoy full rights to trading concessions inside Tibet free from all outside interference.

In return for all these concessions to India McMahon gave a formal assurance that Tibet 'might depend upon the diplomatic support of His Majesty's Government and on reasonable military assistance in the event of continuing Chinese aggression'.[45] Although, as Walter Van Praag has observed, Tibet had secured for herself an 'International personality', by signing the bipartite treaty she had also effectively surrendered large parts of East Tibet to China.[46]

Valueless to India, East Tibet had not been much discussed during the Simla negotiations, and as delegates finally left Simla in the summer of 1914 the Chinese resumed their efforts to organise a separate Sino-Tibetan treaty for this area, this time safe in the knowledge that the British would make no serious attempt to intervene.

7 The China Service and East Tibet, 1914–1918

> The Tibetan Question has always been an unpleasant sore in Anglo-Chinese relations.
>
> Sir Eric Teichman, May 1918

The war years between 1914 and 1918 transformed the British Foreign Office by acting as a catalyst for changes within the Service. London diplomats, who had previously enjoyed their greatest prestige before the July crisis, now found their status significantly undermined by their apparent failure to avert war. As the full horrors of the trenches were gradually revealed in the press it became easy to blame old-style secret diplomacy for causing the war, and attempts to reform the way in which the Foreign Office worked led to a major re-evaluation of strategy and conduct, with greater importance being given to trade and commerce than ever before. By 1916 Sir Arthur Balfour had replaced Sir Edward Grey as foreign secretary, Lord Hardinge had left India, and Lord Crewe had retired from the India Office. Viscount Chelmsford as viceroy, and Sir Austen Chamberlain as secretary of state, the new team in India, were obliged to place Tibetan policy on hold while they concentrated on the more urgent problems created by the growing Indian Independence Movement and the future of British rule in India.[1]

Although the dramatic events in Europe and India between 1914 and 1918 had little direct impact on north-east frontier policy as such, the preoccupation with the war left the Politicals with special problems and made their uphill struggle to maintain British interests and prestige even more difficult and dangerous, especially as the continuing revolutionary disturbances inside China continued to threaten the security of India's borders, presenting the same problems of control as before but without the same level of support from the Indian government.[2] The Far Eastern Department in London and the China Service in Peking were also greatly affected by the war, which made communication between them much more difficult to maintain.[3] At the British legation Jordan now found himself unexpectedly free to direct Tibetan policy for the first time

without interference from London or India, and he took advantage of this unique opportunity to try to settle the status of East Tibet, a thorn in his side and a major cause of friction with the Chinese for many years.

In the run up to the Simla Conference the Indian government had put considerable pressure on the Peking legation to establish a 'watching post' at Ta-chien-lu, close to the disputed Sino-Tibetan border in East Tibet. Their idea was to monitor the situation there and provide more detailed information about Chinese activities on their behalf. Hardinge was especially interested to hear of any successful attempt by the Chinese to sign a separate treaty with the Tibetans, which he could then use as a bargaining tool at Simla, but Jordan had never been happy about locating consular posts in remote areas like East Tibet because they placed excessive demands on the mental and physical health of the staff expected to run them, and because such posts saddled the legation with an extra administrative burden.[4]

The proposed site at Ta-chien-lu was in a politically sensitive location in 1913, being just within Chinese territory. Situated some 10,000 feet above sea level in mountainous terrain, and many days journey by road from Chengdu, its very remoteness afforded greater protection than might have been anticipated, but this was offset by the highly explosive political situation in East Tibet and by the difficulties of establishing speedy contact with Peking in the event of any sudden crisis. The city itself was an important administrative post for the Chinese, and in 1912 they had installed a frontier commissioner there; but was it also important in itself as a thriving commercial centre for the lucrative Chinese tea trade, even though the majority of its population were Tibetan.

Between 1913, when the post was set up, and 1928 when it was finally abandoned, the government of India was especially grateful for the detailed reports produced by the China consuls sent there who risked their sanity, and sometimes their lives, to maintain regular contact with Peking in the most uncomfortable circumstances. As the first occupant of the post, Louis King was commended by Jordan for the excellent content of his reports as well as for the conspicuous tact, ability and presence of mind which he displayed. Eric Coales, his successor in 1916, was also able to use the superior strategic position offered at Ta-chien-lu to produce comprehensive reports, which became an invaluable source of information for Charles Bell who, as political officer in Sikkim, could only rely upon intelligence delivered to him by second- or even third-hand sources. All the reports written by China consular officers at Ta-chien-lu are masterpieces of detail about the geography and complex politics of this region, previously so inaccessible to the British.[5]

Initially a great nuisance to Jordan, Ta-chien-lu eventually began to prove its worth by providing him with an accurate picture of what was actually happening, especially after Yuan's untimely death in suspicious circumstances in June 1916, when China entered a period of warlordism

and civil war.[6] As the war in Europe increasingly diverted British attention away from Asia, Jordan began to organise a forward policy of his own, almost certainly in consultation with Eric Teichman, his assistant at the legation.

Meanwhile, confirmation that talks had actually taken place between the Chinese and the Tibetan Kalon Lama at Chamdo in November 1913 had made London and India anxious to know more about the true state of Sino-Tibetan relations in East Tibet.[7] The unofficial war conducted there had continued throughout the period of negotiation in Simla and despite the ceasefire, with Tibet and China each complaining about violations of the truce by the other. After July 1914 British concerns grew with the knowledge that if the situation deteriorated further into full-scale war Tibet would want to summon her British protector, under the terms of the new bipartite agreement.

Following his return to Tibet in 1913 the Dalai Lama and his closest ministers, Chamba Tendar and Tsarong Shape, had modernised and increased the size of the Tibetan army with the help of Russian and Japanese advisers, a source of further alarm to the British who now feared that a reawakening of a wider international interest in Tibet would broaden the scale of the problem. Whatever their intentions, the Russians and Japanese had each helped to create a formidable fighting force, with four out of five of the newly created Tibetan battalions located in East Tibet, where their modern arms and tactics were already proving successful against the Chinese.[8]

Tibetan military successes had led to the recapture of Tibetan territory taken by the Chinese, but they had done so at great expense, and the Dalai Lama was naturally keen to settle matters to his advantage while his army was still winning. In the spring months of 1915 he therefore permitted the resumption of talks with the Chinese at Shupando in East Tibet, despite vehement opposition from the powerful pro-India factions concentrated at the great monasteries of Sera and Ganden.[9]

Having regained some control of his armies after the setbacks of 1913 and 1914, Yuan had made an arrangement with the provincial governments of Sichuan and Yunnan to place Kokonor under the command of the Chinese Muslim general, Ma Wu. Muslims had dominated Kansu since 1911 and had pursued their own forward policy in the Kokonor region, an area whose very remoteness had protected them from the worst excesses of Chao's campaigns. Unlike the Sichuanese troops, who disliked fighting in such harsh terrain, Ma's troops were hardy horsemen well suited to the kind of campaigning necessary in Kokonor. They were quickly able to establish a loose form of control over the region, which had been previously shared out between numerous independent Tibetan chieftains whose hatred for each other had prevented them from organising any united resistance to the Muslim invaders, and by spring 1916 Ma was sufficiently powerful to be able to issue a proclamation outlining his plans for Kokonor.[10]

The high level of activity in this part of Tibet was to confirm Jordan's belief that had the region been formally offered to them the Chinese would have been willing to sign the Simla treaty, and the escalating crisis in East Tibet might well have been avoided. He had already cited this as further evidence of the incompetence of the Indian government and it now provided him with a convenient excuse to launch his own initiative, beginning with the publication of a document known as the Peking Memorandum, written in September 1916.[11]

During the latter part of 1915 Yuan's ability to control events had begun to fail yet again and what amounted to a civil war between the newly independent provinces of Sichuan and Yunnan began to affect the Sino-Tibetan frontier seriously. By 1917 the last vestiges of order had broken down in East Tibet, but between 1915 and the early months of 1916 Yuan had persisted in his conviction that Britain was the most powerful country in Asia and had continued with attempts to renegotiate a revision of the failed Simla Treaty with Jordan, partly in the forlorn hope that he might also be able to persuade the British to provide him with more financial backing to boost his flagging economy. The close relationship between Yuan and Jordan had helped to preserve this fantasy, drawing criticism of Jordan's handling of the situation from all quarters – especially from George Morrison, once one of his strongest supporters but now one of his fiercest critcs.[12] Shortly before his death in June 1916 Yuan had finally accepted that his chances of either acquiring further British aid or of reconvening the Simla Conference were very remote indeed. The situation in China was looking distinctly unhealthy, but, ironically, when news of the president's death eventually percolated through to East Tibet it had the effect of alleviating tensions for a brief period. Yuan's departure from the scene had provided a breathing space but had also exposed the instability of the Republican regime itself, which in the final months of his life had been driven apart by the president's own attempts to make himself emperor. When conflict resumed after a few weeks in East Tibet it did so with even greater ferocity, with Ta-chien-lu the scene of intensive fighting between rival Sichuanese and Yunnanese factions and soldiers on both sides, often themselves confused and without pay, ran amok in and around the city.[13]

Jordan had been profoundly shaken by Yuan's death and was now convinced that the Foreign Office had lost all confidence in China's ability to control her own affairs. It was this that had prompted him to write his own memorandum in September 1916 in which he put forward his own thoughts and ideas about the situation in East Tibet, and how it might be solved in Britain's best interests, by acknowledging a need for a positive British initiative to try to sort out the crisis created by Yuan's death.

For Jordan the problem of Tibet was one of the running sores of Yuan's administration that needed to be healed before China could even begin to function as a modern state in the western sense. He called for his

government to abandon the Simla agenda entirely and embark upon fresh negotiations for a new Anglo-Chinese treaty about Tibet, suggesting as a starting point for talks that Britain be prepared to accept Chinese control of Kokonor under General Ma Wu. He also argued that China should be allowed to retain those parts of East Tibet taken during the Chao campaigns, simply because they had a long history of involvement with China. He recommended that the creation of inner and outer zones contained in the Simla draft be abandoned because they were quite unworkable, the whole concept of zones being entirely alien to all previous Chinese and Tibetan thinking about Tibet. He warned of the dire consequences of any successful Sino-Tibetan agreement about Tibet which excluded British involvement and suggested that the Dalai Lama retain his spiritual influence over Buddhist monasteries in Kansu and Kokonor, even though they remained under General Ma's political control as a Muslim representative of the Republican Government of China.

Although officially presented as a legation document it represents a clear summation of Jordan's own views, exposing his sound knowledge of the Tibetan situation as well as his clear appreciation of its significance for future Anglo-Chinese relations. It also reveals that, when he chose to, Jordan was prepared to involve himself far more than his more recent predecessors in the wider aspects of British Asian policy, despite the fact that his appointment had been originally made on the basis of his skills as a linguist and as a commercial representative of the British Empire in China.[14]

Jordan's interference in political matters made a positive contribution to Britain's Asian policy. His memorandum was clearly at odds with the 'Simla position' that had come to dominate the Indian government's thinking about Tibet and which viewed the country as a 'subordinate of China', but with 'extensive autonomy'. The proponents of this policy were unwilling to accept Tibet as an independent state and were also anxious to shelve further discussion until after the First World War had run its course. Their views about Jordan's memorandum were influenced not only by their belief that he had been too close to Yuan, and too obviously affected by his death to be taken as a credible authority, but also by their natural reluctance to allow any other branch of the Foreign Service to handle the Tibetan problem. They therefore ignored his advice, dismissing the British minister himself as a much-respected but timid servant of London.[15]

Lord Hardinge's departure from the scene in 1916 and the appointment of Viscount Chelmsford as viceroy did lead to some reassessment of the Tibetan situation, despite the war in Europe, although before he could even consider any revision of the Simla provisions the new viceroy wanted to be sure that Tibet was strong enough to keep China at bay and, more importantly, that the Dalai Lama himself wished to retain friendly relations with Britain.

There were also lingering suspicions about Russian intentions to consider. By September 1917 the Russians were already in the throes of the domestic crisis that would eventually lead to the Bolshevik takeover in November of the same year, but there could be no guarantees at this point that the chaos inside Russia would be more than temporary and that, if the Tsar ever resumed control, Britain might still be called upon to account for what he might still choose to regard as violations of the terms of the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907 by settling with Tibet without recourse to Russia.

In November 1916 Jordan had been forced to return to England on extended leave induced by overwork and stress. His absence from Peking, and Grey's retirement from the Foreign Office in December 1916, meant that any attempt to pursue his independent Tibetan policy had to be shelved. With the civil war in China worsening, and the war in Europe preoccupying the Foreign Office, settling Tibet had naturally become a minor sideshow in the wider context of Asian policy.

Jordan had left Peking for what many assumed to be the last time in November 1916, and Beilby Alston had once again resumed his post as chargé d'affaires in Peking, this time with strong expectations of remaining there on a more permanent basis. During Jordan's absence, however, the crisis in East Tibet deepened, and within a year he had been allowed to return to the Peking legation. When he finally reached China in November 1917 he did so with a coherent plan to settle the affairs of East Tibet, and British Tibetan policy entered a new phase with the appointment of Eric Teichman as special commissioner to Ta-chien-lu.

Eric Teichman's appointment as special commissioner and consul-general to Ta-chien-lu had been confirmed in September 1917 but had been planned long before Jordan left London to return to Peking. Teichman was a first-class diplomat with every expectation of a promising career in front of him. His previous experience as Wilkinson's assistant in Chengdu during the revolutionary disturbances of 1911 had resulted in a commendation for bravery, and his extensive travels in Kansu and Kokonor during 1912 had more than fitted him for the hardships ahead, as had the crucial role he had been playing as Jordan's assistant at the Peking legation since 1915. Despite these impressive credentials, however, many found him an odd choice for this remote posting which, since opening in 1913, had not been occupied by high flyers.[16]

Since the post at Ta-chien-lu had been created at the request of the Indian government simply to monitor Chinese activity in East Tibet it is not hard to see that, in securing his appointment, Jordan intended to use Teichman's expertise for more important matters than the compilation of regular reports, the kind of work that even a new recruit to the China Service might handle. Because he had already worked so closely with Jordan at the Peking legation Teichman's subsequent behaviour at Ta-chien-lu can only be really understood in the context of Jordan's rejected

memorandum of September 1916, which had recommended settling the Sino-Tibetan boundary dispute by reopening discussions with China on an entirely fresh basis.

When Teichman eventually arrived in Ta-chien-lu to take up his appointment in late 1917, the Sino-Tibetan conflict had entered a new and intense phase following the collapse of a temporary truce negotiated at Riwoche.[17] Between 1916 and 1917 Louis King and Eric Coales had been carefully monitoring the situation, often placing themselves in great danger when they left the city to travel to the areas of fighting, although it is not difficult to sympathise with their motives. Ta-chien-lu itself could be a very claustrophobic place in which to work. Surrounded on all sides by mountains, it provided little opportunity for the traditional sporting diversions normally available to consular staff. It was also a place in which minor incidents could quickly escalate to a crisis. During 1916, for example, Coales had reported an incident in which there had been widespread looting in the city by 300 hungry Chinese soldiers, aided and abetted by Tibetan women.[18]

As a major administrative centre for the Republican regime in East Tibet, Ta-chien-lu had inevitably attracted conflict. In 1914 the city had been captured by Tibetan forces, only to be retaken in 1916 by the Republican General Yin, whose subsequent promotion to Chinese frontier commissioner was not much to Coales's liking. Addicted to opium, Yin proved a difficult and often dangerous man to approach, and in the small confines of a city like Ta-chien-lu, where good relationships between liaising officials was vitally important, this became a serious handicap to Coales, whose own position as Britain's official representative was never really secure.[19]

Yin's position was equally fraught. Originally from Yunnan, he was now the official representative of the Republican government in Ta-chien-lu at a time when it wasn't always clear from month to month whether Republican, Yunnanese, Sichuanese or Tibetan forces were in control of the region. In such circumstances Coales naturally found himself under much the same kind of pressure as that experienced by O'Connor at Gyantse and by Campbell at Chumbi only a few years earlier, and it was therefore with some relief that he witnessed Yin's sudden flight from Ta-chien-lu in the summer of 1917 as Sichuanese forces seized control of the city. After a brief period of intense fighting between the provincial armies of Sichuan and Yunnan, Coales survived to welcome Yin's replacement, the more amenable Ch'en Hsai-Ling, a veteran of Chao's campaigns, who as acting high commissioner at Ta-chien-lu was still in post when Teichman arrived.[20]

Teichman's progress to Ta-chien-lu had been deliberately protracted. He had taken the opportunity provided by the tortuous outward journey to study the Sino-Tibetan frontier situation at close quarters and was therefore able to provide Jordan with a reliable and graphic first-hand

account of what was happening there. His reports also contained his own ambitious proposals for a realignment of the border between what he referred to as autonomous Tibet and Chinese Sichuan, based upon his 'private investigations'.[21]

Louis King and Eric Coales had also made recommendations in their monthly reports to Peking, but what was clearly different about Teichman's observations was their scale, and his confidence in being able to present them. His regular correspondence with Jordan in the months between his arrival in Ta-chien-lu, and his departure for the war-torn frontier in March 1918 on what he described as a 'peace mission', confirms the close relationship with the British minister that had developed during their time together in Peking and, as Alastair Lamb has suggested, it leads to the unavoidable conclusion that Teichman was acting in accordance with a prearranged plan, although he was afterwards quick to deny any such collusion between them and was always keen to present all subsequent achievements as his own.[22]

Teichman left Ta-chien-lu in March 1918 on the first leg of his peace mission without waiting for official sanction. His behaviour was not as unreasonable as it might first appear, however, since the difficulties involved in acquiring permission were invariably exacerbated by the length of time it took any correspondence to reach Ta-chien-lu from the nearest China consular post at Chengdu, and because the disruption caused by the fighting in the surrounding area was compounded by the reluctance of the relevant Chinese authority to sanction any British travel outside the city.

Coales had previously discovered this when his attempts to leave Ta-chien-lu had led to great difficulties with the Sichuanese authorities, who used what they described as his 'irregular behaviour' as a convenient pretext on which to challenge Britain's right to station a consular official there in the first place.[23] Teichman's peace mission was therefore unusual in a number of respects. He had been confident enough to leave without waiting for Jordan's permission, and by openly describing his journey as a 'peace mission' he was revealing that he had more in mind than merely investigating and reporting the facts for his government. In fact he was attempting to put Jordan's plan to settle the frontier into action, and claiming to be complying with a request of the Republican government in Peking, he set out to play the role of official mediator in the dispute.[24]

Teichman's detailed report to Jordan in December 1917 had been based upon his own account of events on the Sino-Tibetan frontier during the late summer and early autumn of that year and was the main reason why he had taken so long to reach his post. Between his arrival at Ta-chien-lu in November 1917 and his return to the frontier in March 1918, however, events had taken a dramatic turn for the worse, and as he left the relative security of his consulate on that spring morning he was almost certainly quite unaware of the dangers awaiting him.

Chinese forces in East Tibet were well organised under the leadership of three frontier commissioners or generals with their respective headquarters in key locations in East Tibet at Ta-chien-lu, Chamdo and Batang. As British consul-general at Ta-chien-lu Teichman was expected to liaise about his Peace Mission with the relevant frontier commissioner, but had been unable to do so because Ch'en had been absent from the city at the time of his departure. This also only served to increase his vulnerability as Ch'en had given no indication that he might approve such a venture at a time when the Chinese had all to gain and nothing to lose by advancing into East Tibet.

Each of the three frontier commissioners was empowered to exercise full military control in the area assigned to them and they did this with varying degrees of success. Of the three, General P'eng, the commissioner for Chamdo, seemed to pose the greatest threat to the success of Teichman's mission. P'eng was the most feared and despised of the Chinese leaders, having been responsible for the destruction of the three great Tibetan monasteries of Chamdo, Draya and Yemdo during the Chao campaigns a few years before.

Shortly before Teichman left Ta-chien-lu P'eng's mishandling of a relatively minor frontier incident had led to an escalation of the Sino-Tibetan conflict during which the Tibetans began to make significant gains which enabled them to alter the balance of power in their favour. P'eng's actions on this occasion were partly the result of his blind personal ambition to lead an attack on Lhasa itself, and were partly conducted in the mistaken belief that the East Tibetans so disliked and resented the authority of the Lhasa government that they would be unwilling to resist Chinese forces.[25]

The incident which had transformed the Sino-Tibetan conflict had occurred during August 1917 when a party of Peng's soldiers had begun to cut grass for their ponies in a remote valley in a disputed area near the Chinese-held town of Riwoche. The men had been approached by Tibetan soldiers, who questioned their right to be there. After a scuffle, the Tibetans had been 'arrested' by the Chinese and taken back to their temporary camp from where they were transferred to Chinese headquarters at Riwoche a few days later. When the Tibetan commander demanded the return of his men, the Chinese panicked and referred the matter on to P'eng at Chamdo. Meanwhile, driven to exasperation by misinformation peddled by the Chinese, the Tibetan commander attacked the temporary camp to which his men had originally been taken in the mistaken belief that they were still there. The situation is confused at this point by three separate accounts of the events provided by Teichman and Louis King, who each offer different interpretations of P'eng's possible motives. Teichman's original report to Jordan had been based upon verbal evidence from Chinese soldiers whom he met soon after the event while he was still en route to Ta-chien-lu to take up his post.[26] According to this

source, P'eng was very interested in renewing talks with the Tibetans and would have resisted any course of action which might jeopardise his chances of doing this. Teichman's later account in his *Travels of Consular Officer in East Tibet*, published in 1919, reveals far less sympathy for P'eng, however, and was probably written in an attempt to present the Chinese as aggressors for purely diplomatic reasons. King's account, in his book *China in Turmoil* published in 1928, presents a more balanced view of events, arguing that there were faults on both sides. Although he later married a Tibetan and adopted a very pro-Tibetan stance throughout his career, King's sympathy for P'eng provides some evidence that perhaps the general was reacting out of stupidity and ignorance rather than with any sinister long-term plan to re-invade Lhasa. Furthermore, when Teichman himself had met P'eng in 1917 he had noted the general's genuine conviction that the East Tibetan's hearty dislike of the Lhasa authorities was so strong that they would do little to resist a Chinese advance on their city.[27]

Whatever the true facts of the situation, events moved very quickly as the result of a quarrel over the incident which developed between P'eng and the Kalon Lama, commander of Tibetan forces in East Tibet. After refusing to respond to the Kalon Lama's polite request for the return of the arrested Tibetans, P'eng had sent a letter containing dung, apparently in a misguided attempt to express his contempt for the Tibetan commander. Undeterred by this gross insult, the Kalon Lama had sent a second letter to P'eng only to receive the reply that the general was preparing to advance on Lhasa and had given orders for the Tibetan prisoners to be brought to him at Chamdo. His patience now tested to the limit, the Kalon Lama then gave orders for Tibetan troops to retrieve the captives. Riwoche was seized, the temporary truce broken, and Chamdo itself was surrounded by the Tibetan army.[28]

The siege of Chamdo lasted many months. P'eng, forced to defend his headquarters against far stronger opposition than he had anticipated, had suffered a humiliating defeat in April 1918, only weeks after Teichman had left Ta-chien-lu. The successful siege of such a large and important administrative centre like Chamdo gave the Tibetan forces an enormous boost of confidence, especially as the Chinese army had been shown to be divided. Having lost out at Chamdo P'eng had soon been deserted by his fellow commissioners at Batang and Ta-chien-lu who had refused to come to the aid of someone they already perceived to be a dangerous rival. He had then been further humiliated by his own forces, who quickly disowned him when Chamdo fell, leaving him to the mercy of his enemy, the Kalon Lama. With victory in his grasp, however, the Tibetan commander was reluctant to press home his advantage by moving on to Ta-chien-lu, despite Lhasa's approval and the obvious enthusiasm of his own troops.[29]

Teichman had left Ta-chien-lu while the Chamdo siege was still in progress. He had left with the hope that his peace mission would solve the

problem of the Sino-Tibetan boundary and establish an understanding between Britain and China over the future of East Tibet. He had little interest in how the Tibetans might cope with the result of any Anglo-Chinese discussions, or any knowledge of how the fall of Chamdo would alter the situation. He had left Ta-chien-lu supremely confident of his ability to act as mediator, but also quite unaware of the extent to which his own life might be in danger. Although he had an excellent knowledge of Chinese, and was indeed noted among colleagues for his skill in dealing with Chinese officers man to man, he had no knowledge of the Tibetan language, either spoken or written. In East Tibet he was entirely dependent on the goodwill of the Tibetan people to whom he promised nothing, for he did not expect them to profit from any treaty settlement of their territory negotiated between the British and the Chinese. He felt no personal animosity towards the Tibetan people and even had some sympathy for their plight, but once Chamdo had been retaken by Tibetan forces he discovered that he had no option other than to include the Kalon Lama in the negotiations, even though, as a loyal and ambitious servant of the China Consular Service, he continued to believe that there could be no peace on the frontier until the balance of power was restored to China. He never fully appreciated that the Tibetans might be able to run their own affairs, and one of the key aims of his peace mission was to stem any Tibetan advance towards Ta-chien-lu, a purpose directly opposed to what the Tibetans now anticipated for themselves.[30]

In his book about the peace mission to East Tibet Teichman describes his movements in Batang, Chamdo and Rongabasta in rich detail. He writes about a vast land where the experience of war varied greatly from region to region. One of the biggest problems facing any strangers to this region was the opposition they might receive from the nomadic tribes who lived there and who made it virtually impossible for any organised administration of the area, either by the Chinese or by the authorities in Lhasa. The sheer practicalities of travel in this part of Tibet was determined by the willingness of the local population to supply the traveller with fresh horses needed for the long distances between administrative centres. This made all journeys hazardous and had made life extremely precarious for those unfortunate Chinese officials selected for service in East Tibet.[31]

The area through which Teichman's mission would pass on the first leg of its journey from Ta-chien-lu to Jyekundo in Kokonor was notorious for the hostility of its tribes. Teichman had previously explored this area in 1912, but now he noted a great increase in the number of modern rifles acquired from Muslim traders, which made the local tribesmen even more formidable than before. A few miles from Jyekundo itself he found the area comparatively peaceful and a direct contrast to the rest of Kokonor, which seemed to him to be either in open rebellion or on the verge of revolt. His bureaucratic mind discerned real differences between those areas in which the skeleton Chinese administration held firm because its

officials were of 'good character' and those where the officials were simply 'military adventurers of low origin' who exploited the people, and where, as a result, law and order had completely broken down. At the important military and trading centre of Jyekundo in southern Kokonor he found the local Tibetans resentful but resigned to the dictatorship of General Ma, who at the time of Teichman's arrival was still in the process of consolidating his control of the region by increasing taxation and by installing his own magistrates to administer justice there.[32]

At first sight Kokonor appeared to be a wilderness of sparsely inhabited high grassland, but it had always been of great strategic importance to the Chinese because its geographical position made it an effective buffer between Tibet and China which they could exploit at will. In recognition of this, they had posted an *amban* to Sining, close to the Kumbum monastery, an important spiritual centre for Tibetan and Mongolian Buddhists and a refuge for the Dalai Lama during his periods of exile.[33]

Teichman's account of his time in Kokonor is much affected by his undisguised admiration for General Ma's Muslim soldiers, whom he refers to as 'skilled horsemen' and 'sturdy fighters, stiffened by their religion'. Beside these men the Sichuanese troops were poor specimens indeed, and seemed to him weak and 'always pining for their opium pipes'. Teichman further believed that Kokonor had escaped much of the fighting experienced in other parts of East Tibet because of the good working relationship which Ma had already established with the Kalon Lama, both of whom he judged to be men of 'wisdom and integrity'.[34] This view of the Kalon Lama would be confirmed for him after the fall of Chamdo when he was able to see for himself the great veneration in which the Tibetan commander-in-chief was held by his men. As the result of the harmony between Ma and the Kalon Lama, the peace mission found themselves able to continue their journey to Chamdo using yaks provided by local Tibetans.[35]

On the evening of 8 May, two months after Teichman had left Ta-chien-lu, events took a dramatic and unexpected turn when a horseman arrived at his camp with a message from the Kalon Lama bringing the news that Chamdo had fallen to the Tibetans. The message had already taken nearly four weeks to reach him, and it took a further twelve days for the peace mission to reach the city. Though prepared for chaos, Teichman was appalled at the scene which greeted him. His first impression of this great religious and administrative centre was of a 'miserable place' consisting of 'a few yamens and temples and a village of mud hovels', but its depressing appearance was emphasised even further by the tragic ruins of the great Chamdo monastery that had once dominated the city and had been one of the wealthiest and most powerful monasteries in East Tibet. Unburied corpses lay everywhere and Chinese soldiers, stunned and angered by their defeat, were united only by their common hatred for the fallen General P'eng.[36]

Chamdo lay approximately halfway along the ancient Lhasa to Tachien-lu highway and was just over one month's riding distance from Lhasa for ordinary travellers, although Lhasa couriers could get urgent messages from city to city within ten days by riding non-stop, using a system of small stations from which they obtained fresh horses when necessary. Teichman had formed the distinct impression while en route to Chamdo that had Chao Erh Feng lived and been able to press ahead with the programme of social reform which he had started in 1908, the city and the surrounding area might have been much more disposed to accept Chinese rule. However, he also felt sure that the chaos which had subsequently been generated by the new Republican government's grand but half-formed plans for the area had allowed Chamdo to lapse into a state of virtual anarchy in the months leading up to the siege, giving the Tibetan forces an easy victory. His views were partly a reflection of his innate bias against the competence of the Tibetan army when pitted against the Chinese, but were also part of his assessment of the region as he had seen it in 1912 when the local people had been the grateful recipients of Chao's social reforms and before the emergence of the Republican scheme to make Tibet one of the five nations of China. Teichman had been clearly under the impression that East Tibet was rightfully part of China and had been under nominal Chinese control for two centuries, his bias a further example of the way in which British policy in the Far East had been dominated by the interests of preserving good Anglo-Chinese relations.[37]

Teichman was unexpectedly impressed by the reverence and respect given to the Kalon Lama by his Tibetan forces, but he was also alarmed by it because he realised that, given the word, the Tibetan army would move on neighbouring Batang without a moment's hesitation. If he was to achieve the main purpose of his peace mission and effect a lasting truce, he realised that he needed to find a replacement for the disgraced General P'eng, the man whom he had previously envisaged would be a suitable Chinese mediator for his proposed peace talks. Teichman also knew that he needed to act quickly in the short breathing space provided by the ending of the siege if he was to successfully organise a temporary truce and so prevent a resumption of the hostilities, which at this stage would almost certainly have resulted in a second spectacular Tibetan victory at Batang. Unaware that the Kalon Lama had no intention of moving on to Batang in the immediate future, he promptly recruited the services of General Liu, the nearest available Chinese official and garrison commander of Chinese forces at Batang, whom he persuaded to represent China at the truce talks.[38] After lengthy discussions with the Kalon Lama, Liu was found acceptable to the Tibetans as the Chinese representative to the talks and Teichman set out post-haste for the Chinese-held city of Batang in high expectation of securing a truce. When he arrived in Batang, however, he discovered that a stranger had now entered the

picture in the person of Dr Shelton, an American missionary who would play a vital role in the negotiations to come.[39]

Before Teichman arrived in Batang, and without consulting him, Shelton had decided to organise a peace mission of his own and, taking Liu with him, had set out for Markham Gartok, a small town to the west of Batang, where he hoped to negotiate a temporary truce with the local Lhasa official, or *teji*, there. Because the *teji* ranked second in importance to the Kalon Lama, Shelton believed that such an arrangement would also secure the backing of the Lhasa authorities. When Teichman eventually met up with this rival peace mission at Markham Gartok on 4 June he found Liu preparing to sign a month-long truce with the Tibetans before returning to Batang, but he also agreed to help Teichman negotiate with the Kalon Lama for a more permanent settlement.[40]

The British commissioner now found himself in a rather peculiar position. Although officially a representative of the British government, he was really no more than a self-appointed mediator, and unlike Shelton – who claimed to have been approached directly by Liu – he had not been asked to intervene by either side in the dispute. With P'eng discredited Teichman's position was now virtually untenable since his main argument in launching his peace initiative had been that the general had asked him to return to Chamdo when they had previously met in the late summer of 1917. If he was to salvage the peace mission and succeed in organising a lasting peace treaty Teichman now found himself completely dependent upon Shelton, the only foreigner to be known and trusted by both sides. His subsequent failure to acknowledge this fact fully in his later published account was probably due to his determination to exaggerate the importance of his own presence there to the British Foreign Office, but was also related to a need to justify to an even wider public the necessity for British intervention in a situation which, in such anarchic conditions, could expect to produce only a negligible result.[41]

Ironically, his very position at this time also reinforced his original excuse for going to the frontier in person for in such extreme circumstances the only effective way to negotiate a truce was to do so on the spot. Teichman's optimism about the possibility of successfully completing the peace talks at this point is reflected in a letter to Jordan, written en route to Batang, in which he expressed the view that at last 'the unpleasant sore' that Tibet had created in Anglo-Chinese relations could now be satisfactorily healed.[42] This kind of approach to Tibet was typical of the attitude towards small Central Asian countries which had dominated the Great Game ideology of the previous century and serves as a small indication that though the Foreign Office in London might condemn such imperialistic adventures of this kind the spirit of Younghusband was still very much alive in the China Consular Service in 1918.

When he returned to Batang on 15 June with Liu and Shelton, Teichman's first objective was to secure official recognition for Liu from Peking,

as well as from the provincial authorities in Sichuan who now controlled Chinese forces in East Tibet. Batang was the main headquarters for Chinese troops on this part of the frontier and contained Liu's garrison, which had housed remnants of the old Manchu forces that had been there well before Chao's time and were, according to Teichman, so opium-sodden and demoralised that they were 'nearly useless as a fighting force'. He soon realised that Batang itself had become a dumping ground for all the disabled, sick and destitute Chinese in East Tibet, and that the numbers of wounded entering the city during the recent fighting had substantially increased the population. He also discovered that the Tibetans in Batang infinitely preferred nominal rule from China to a takeover by the Lhasa authorities and he believed that P'eng had been correct in his assumption that here at least the local people would be prepared to resist any attempt to return them to Lhasa by force – if only because they preferred the relative independence they had enjoyed for so many years under the Chinese.[43]

In this situation, where there were strong rumours that the Kalon Lama might attack and almost certainly take the city at any time, Teichman knew that he must act quickly even if this meant taking Liu's official delegate status as read before waiting for official confirmation from the relevant Chinese authorities so far away. He was also aware that the temporary month-long truce negotiated by Shelton and Liu at Markham Gartok would soon expire, and that when it did the local Tibetan leader intended to advance on Batang.[44] With Chinese forces already preparing to retreat to Ta-chien-lu, Teichman determined to return immediately with Liu to Chamdo, where the Kalon Lama had his base and where he felt he had the best chance of striking a deal. He was much comforted by the news that the Tibetan commander also seemed anxious to discuss peace terms and to this end had already ordered a ceasefire, partly in order to enable Teichman and Liu to travel in safety to Chamdo but mainly because he wanted to settle the dispute while his army were still winning.

When Teichman's party reached Chamdo on 15 July they were amazed to be greeted by an official reception of Tibetan dignitaries and a guard of honour provided by the Kalon Lama himself. They were also relieved to receive word that Liu's status had been confirmed, but were disappointed by the letter containing this information which also included a Chinese proposal to establish a temporary frontier line along the historic Yangtze boundary, which Teichman knew the Tibetans would not approve having only recently reoccupied the neighbouring Tibetan provinces of Derge and Nyarong.[45]

On 20 July events took an unexpected and unsettling turn when Teichman received an official letter from Ch'en in Ta-chien-liu announcing the appointment of the prince of Chala as his 'peace emissary' to the forthcoming talks. The prince was already well known to the European missionaries in Batang, both as a friend and as a man prepared to bend with

whichever wind was blowing in order to keep himself alive and in power. At the time he was little more than a puppet in the hands of Ch'en and had previously been employed in a similar capacity as Ch'en's representative elsewhere in East Tibet in the hope that his presence would make Chinese proposals more palatable to fellow Tibetans. In Kanze, for example, he had helped to arrange a successful ceasefire, despite the fact that the local Tibetan commander had refused to speak to him, and many Tibetans there had regarded him as a traitor. Clearly this man would be a mixed blessing since there could be no guarantee that he would do more than antagonise the Tibetans, who were now in a much stronger position to resist his suggestions.[46]

Meanwhile, Teichman had given a great deal of thought to the terms he wished to appear on his proposed peace treaty. While still in Batang in late June he had written a personal letter to Jordan containing a rough draft of the sort of proposals he intended to put forward. He had received no reply to this letter and, underestimating the length of time it was taking correspondence to travel in this war-torn area, he had assumed that Jordan had no objection to what he was doing. When talks finally opened in Chamdo on 11 August he therefore entered the meeting confident of Jordan's support, and relieved that the prince of Chala had not yet managed to reach the city.[47]

As soon as negotiations began Teichman was made aware that Liu was unable to offer the kind of backup that he had anticipated and that, as a minor Chinese official without the necessary level of diplomatic expertise and with little knowledge or understanding of Tibetan procedures, he was in fact going to prove a dangerous liability. Liu himself soon made it very clear that he was extremely nervous about his own situation and began to show a marked reluctance to start negotiations for fear of reprisals from his superiors. A further difficulty also arose when Teichman realised that Liu had lost all contact with the Sichuanese authorities, who by this time had themselves completely broken with the central Republican government in Peking and declared themselves an independent province. As the traditional guardians of the frontier under the Manchu, this move had given the Sichuanese authorities even greater credibility as a real power in the area before the Tibetan victory at Chamdo altered the situation irrevocably. Liu was now obliged to act in the hope that his superiors would approve his decisions after the event, and Teichman's own position was also weakened by the fact that he too had lost contact with Jordan since all communications from Peking came via the Sichuanese city of Chengdu, by now the scene of serious fighting between the provincial armies of Sichuan and Yunnan.[48]

Despite these many obstacles a viable treaty was somehow put together in Chamdo on 19 August 1918 and signed by Teichman, Liu and the Kalon Lama. 'The Chamdo truce', as it became known in British circles, successfully defined the geographical boundaries of East Tibet but failed

to reach agreement over the duration of the truce, and Teichman was now faced with the thorny problem of how to proceed. A decision was made for him when, on 22 August, he received two letters. The first, dated 10 May, was from Jordan ordering him to negotiate directly with Ch'en in Ta-chien-lu before going ahead with any talks. The second, also dated 10 May, came from Simla, and this instructed him to remain in Chamdo to effect a truce. It is not hard to imagine the confusion which Teichman now experienced at receiving these two conflicting sets of orders from Simla and Peking, especially as the situation had looked so positive only a few days before. In a private letter to Meyrick Hewlett, the British consul in Chengdu, he described his feelings of uncertainty and isolation, and he asked Hewlett to inform the Sichuanese authorities that the Tibetan forces had only been prevented from destroying Batang by the promise of a successful outcome to the peace talks with the Chinese. Like Younghusband before him, Teichman found himself faced with the old dilemma of having to make an important decision without the certainty of official support, although he did suspect correctly that the main reason behind the conflicting orders was a disagreement between Jordan and the government of India over the role the China Service was expected to play in the formulation of Britain's Tibetan policy.[49]

After a period of agonising indecision the belated arrival of the prince of Chala on 29 August offered an unexpected opportunity to move things forward. The prince brought with him news that 3,000 crack Chinese troops had been sent from Ta-chien-lu to Rongbasta in the Kanze region, the recent scene of bitter fighting. Although a temporary ceasefire organised by the prince himself still held, the presence there of fresh Chinese soldiers had placed an unbearable strain on the situation which now threatened to erupt into fresh violence at any moment. Attempts by both sides to negotiate by letter had failed, partly due to the Chinese tendency to treat all Tibetans as naughty children, but also due to a new-found Tibetan confidence which had received a huge boost after the fall of Chamdo and which made them 'itching' to press ahead with their military campaign.[50] As Liu's nerve had completely failed him by this time Teichman was prepared to accept the prince as the Chinese delegate, if only to further the talks which he believed should now be held at Rongbasta, a village situated in a remote valley but on the main Ta-chien-lu to Jyekundo road.

Teichman and the prince reached Rongbasta on 19 September and went immediately to the Chinese camp where Teichman was introduced to Han Kuang-Chung, a Chinese magistrate from Ta-chien-lu and the prince's nervous co-negotiator for the ceasefire. Han Kuang-Chung had elected to stay in the comparative safety of Rongbasta and now awaited the prince's return with some trepidation. In his role of mediator Teichman immediately took control, first visiting the Tibetan camp where he was surprised to discover that most of the Tibetan officials were 'most civilised'

and not at all like the kind of people the Chinese had described to him. He was most impressed by their knowledge of the west, and by the discovery that many had previously visited India and carried with them Kodak cameras and field glasses which were similar to his own. He believed that these men could be persuaded to come to the negotiating table, but he formed a quite different opinion of the officials in the Chinese camp who, by comparison, seemed to him very narrow-minded and insular. Despite their veneer of sophistication most of them had never previously travelled beyond Sichuan, and he found that they appeared to possess an arrogance which he believed might prove a real barrier to progress.[51]

During the course of his investigations in both camps Teichman had noticed that the sides were evenly matched in strength and that, despite the bravado, both were getting uneasy about the prospect of any forthcoming battle. Unlike the Tibetans, who could exist quite easily on barley ferried to them across the harsh terrain by yak and mule, the Sichuanese soldiers were accustomed to a more refined rice-based diet which was costly and difficult to provide in this remote location. The Tibetans were equally unsure about their ability to endure a sustained period of fighting so far from home, and so near to harvest time, and had been quite dismayed by the arrival of the fresh Chinese forces from Ta-chien-lu. With all these considerations sapping their will to fight a deciding battle, Teichman believed that both sides would be in the mood to negotiate, and he called a conference on 20 September in the hope that they could discuss the practicalities of organising a permanent truce.[52]

The discussions were held in a huge tent erected in a field between the lines. Teichman's optimism about an early settlement was soon dashed, however, as both sides launched into lengthy and interminable arguments which then developed into a great debate about the correct procedure for a mutual withdrawal, each army leader naturally demanding that the other withdraw first. The fresher Ta-chien-lu force were still happy to fight and were particularly anxious to establish the point that the initiative was with them, arguing that they were simply making peace with the Tibetans because they had no wish to 'chastise or humiliate them further'. Such patronising sentiments were obviously not very appealing to the Tibetans who were equally keen to stress their recent victory at Chamdo, and the fact that they were quite prepared to resume the fighting if necessary, in order to show the Chinese who was on top.[53]

Eventually, despite the confrontational approach adopted by both sides, a compromise was reached, based upon a simultaneous mutual withdrawal from Rongbasta that would take the Chinese to Kanze and the Tibetans to a point just within the border of Derge. A truce was then duly signed and messages sent to Ch'en at Ta-chien-lu and the Kalon Lama at Chamdo asking for their official approval. After establishing that the local Tibetan population might now return to their land to harvest their ripened crops, the conference then adjourned and both sides retired to

their respective camps to await official ratification which, given the remoteness of the area, was expected to take at least three weeks. With official approval confirmed the conference was then reconvened and the Rongbasta truce formally ratified on 10 October.[54]

After the ceremony the prince of Chala held a huge banquet to which everyone came, despite the acrimony of the previous weeks. For his part the prince was much relieved when the talks ended successfully for had they failed he would almost certainly have been called to account by his own people for yet again helping the Chinese at Tibet's expense. His role as mediator now over, Tiechman spent his final days at Rongbasta watching the gradual withdrawal through field glasses from the safety of a flat roof and noting, with some amusement, the way in which each side continued to argue and procrastinate to the last.[55]

Unlike Chamdo, where Teichman had signed as a third party, Rongbasta was a bipartite agreement, with the British representative acting as mediator and witness to events. It was expected to work only as a temporary settlement, intended to defuse the situation until a more permanent solution might be found, but it remained effective until 1930, partly because each side had no wish to resume fighting over such a remote valley, and partly because the treaty had contained an additional clause which had managed to be very specific in defining a clear boundary point at Beri, beyond which the Chinese agreed not to cross.[56]

The Rongbasta truce was hailed as a great diplomatic victory in Britain, as well as a great personal triumph for Teichman himself, and he was always careful to take full credit for his East Tibetan venture. His pivotal role as mediator is highly questionable, however, for without the support of the Kalon Lama, General Liu and Dr Shelton he would have been lucky to have survived unharmed in areas where it was quite possible for anyone, even a high-ranking servant of His Majesty's government, to conveniently vanish without trace.[57]

Teichman's *Travels*, which he was encouraged to publish soon after his return to Peking, gives a very massaged account of events and was probably deliberately distorted in order to present a view acceptable to the British Foreign Office, his earlier reports from the spot being sometimes at odds with his later polished account. Teichman regarded Chamdo and Rongbasta as successful attempts to establish a basis for an Anglo-Chinese dialogue about Tibet, and after signing the Rongbasta Truce, and no doubt heady with his own achievement, he decided to take off on an impromptu survey of the East Tibetan marches, apparently unaware of Jordan's repeated requests that he return immediately to his post at Ta-chien-lu.[58]

In Peking the situation had been dramatically altered by these events in East Tibet, which had coincided with Sichuan's formal declaration of independence. Jordan himself was worn out by the extra administrative burden created by the First World War, which had taken many of his staff

out of the legation to serve in Europe, and by the untimely death of his beloved only daughter in May 1918. This had dealt him a severe personal blow which contributed to his great administrative burden, making it difficult to keep pace with Teichman's activities. In addition, the new Republican regime had made it clear to him that they had now abandoned their offensive in East Tibet in order to concentrate on the military campaign to regain control of Sichuan.[59]

During and after the negotiations for the Chamdo truce Jordan had also been engaged in yet another battle with the Indian government about his initiative in East Tibet. Having reluctantly accepted Teichman's presence there as mediator, Lord Chelmsford was keen to see some positive result in the form of a permanent treaty, and had issued the orders for Teichman to stay on in Chamdo. This had caused much confusion and Jordan had been infuriated to discover that this had been done without any opposition from the India Office. He had also been very concerned about Teichman's decision to use Liu as an official Chinese delegate without waiting for permission from the Peking legation, and his anger had been increased by Teichman's failure to return to Ta-chien-lu immediately after leaving Rongbasta. Despite this gross act of insubordination, however, Teichman not only went unpunished but was able to continue with his successful diplomatic career at the Peking legation.[60]

Given Jordan's many problems at the time it is difficult to estimate at what point he began to act independently in pursuing this unofficial forward policy, but from the British point of view at least its results were quite spectacular. Although it is possible that the situation in Sichuan would have forced a Chinese withdrawal from East Tibet sooner or later, the effect of the Rongbasta truce was to settle the area and mark an end to British involvement in East Tibet for many years. The post at Ta-chien-lu remained open until 1928, mainly due to pressure from the Indian government, but it was not fully manned after Louis King left under rather unfortunate circumstances in 1921, and in 1924 its entire correspondence was lost to bandits.[61]

Teichman's 'peace mission' to East Tibet produced exactly what Jordan had originally intended – namely, an end to the Tibetan problem for the China Service. It may be rightly regarded as a major diplomatic coup for the British legation, but one which could only have been delivered in the peculiar circumstances created by the First World War, which had allowed British ministers like Jordan to act independently in areas outside the main European theatre of war.

The successful conclusion to British involvement in East Tibet did not mean that British interest in the country had run its course, for as the First World War ended, and Curzon once again returned to centre stage in 1919 as British foreign secretary, there was a reawakening of British interest in Tibet.

8 Lhasa unveiled

Britain and Tibet in the post-war world, 1918–1922

> [T]he Dalai Lama was discussing the future of Tibet. He desired to see Tibet entirely independent of China and consulting the British Government whenever necessity arises.
>
> Charles Bell, *c.* 1914

In 1922 a conference was held in Washington, D.C. Its aim was to end rivalries and reorder Asian policy to accommodate the shifts in power brought about by the First World War. The fact that the conference had been convened in Washington and not in Paris was significant, revealing the extent to which America had begun to establish herself as a diplomatic leader after 1918. Her growing influence in international affairs had encouraged Britain to reconsider her Asian policy in the new post-war climate.

In the period between the signing of the Rongbasta truce in 1918 and the start of the Washington Conference, Britain's Tibetan policy was dominated by attempts to resume Anglo-Chinese talks about the future of Tibet, thwarted by China's refusal to sign the tripartite agreement at Simla in 1914. The First World War and the preoccupation with Europe had meant that British Tibetan policy had been neglected, but once the negotiations resumed in 1918 they exposed the very different position in which Britain now found herself in the post-war world and powerful new forces now intervened to threaten a successful outcome. The growing influence of America and Japan in Chinese affairs, coupled with the Dalai Lama's awareness that he might now be able to exercise more control over events in the new climate of international diplomacy – and, above all that, the confusion generated by the continuing chaos inside China itself – all helped to prevent the achievement of a satisfactory solution to what the British still referred to as their 'Tibetan problem'.

Curzon and the revival of the forward policy, 1919–1922

After months of speculation it finally looked as though there was going to be a real chance of reaching agreement with China over Tibet when the Chinese presented a list of suggestions for British consideration on 30 May 1919. The 'May proposals', as they became known, were intended to reopen talks which, the Chinese argued, had become bogged down at Simla by mutual intransigence. Jordan welcomed the proposals as a means of settling the Tibetan issue which continued to plague him even after the Rongbasta treaty had been signed. There was also a strong feeling in London and in India that no time should be lost in getting the Chinese to the negotiating table before they changed their minds. Despite their obligations to Tibet under the bipartite treaty of July 1914, and their presence at the original tripartite conference, British diplomats felt no desire to involve the Tibetans in further discussions about their future status and they were not invited to participate, a revealing example of the way in which the new post-war diplomacy was already proving to be merely a shallow commitment on paper.[1]

As the British foreign secretary after 1919, Curzon was also quite willing to duck the knotty question of consulting Russia about the proposals on the grounds that it would be unwise to raise the validity of these talks in the context of the Russian Convention, a treaty which he had vehemently opposed in the past and which had proved to be a barrier to fruitful Anglo-Chinese talks about Tibet since 1907. As a strong supporter of a continuing British presence in Tibet, Curzon was prepared to abandon temporarily his plan to station a permanent British representative at Lhasa in an attempt to get things moving, and by June 1919 Jordan was pleased to announce that the Chinese themselves were still willing to go ahead with the discussions and were even prepared to debate the boundary issue, stated as a major reason for the breakdown of the Simla negotiations in 1914.[2]

When the talks opened in Peking on 13 August Jordan reported that the Chinese continued to appear 'reasonable' and had agreed to go ahead with a further meeting. It came as rather a shock, therefore, when negotiations suddenly and inexplicably collapsed only two weeks later. The Chinese refused to continue the dialogue, giving as the vague excuse that 'the situation in China had changed', but Jordan's feeling that the Japanese were somehow at the bottom of the breakdown created a crisis of confidence between Britain and her ally which mitigated against the chances of the talks being re-established. As time went on, and as two further attempts to revive discussions in August 1921 and again in October 1922 failed, it became apparent in London that the Japanese were only part of the problem.[3]

When the talks had still not reconvened in November 1919 Curzon questioned Jordan's opinion that the Japanese were wholly to blame. This

was the first in a series of attacks levelled at the British minister by the new foreign secretary, who began to argue that it was Jordan himself who was proving the greatest obstacle to progress in Peking. Curzon suggested that he should now retire before any fresh Anglo-Chinese talks could begin, even though Jordan had made it perfectly clear that he wished the negotiations to go ahead and, what was more, had made it known that he had come to regard their success as a fitting end to his long and distinguished diplomatic career.[4] It seems obvious at this point that after many years absence from India Curzon intended to revive and continue with the Tibetan forward policy which he had initiated in 1902, and that he was even prepared to refrain from pushing for a reopening of the talks at this stage in order to secure Jordan's removal, despite vociferous protests from the viceroy, Lord Chelmsford, in India, and Edwin Montagu, secretary of state at the India Office in London, who each complained that their positive recommendations for settling the issue were being ignored by the Foreign Office.[5]

Whatever his motives, by December 1919 Curzon had clearly taken the decision to handle the Talks himself and to this end had entered into a dialogue with Alfred Sze, the Chinese minister in London.[6] His complete confidence in his own ability to solve the problem by adopting a hard line was typical of the sort of approach which had forced the issue in 1903 and which had sent Younghusband to Tibet, but in the new post-war climate it proved to be a clumsy tactic which failed badly. Curzon himself seemed determined to drag the Chinese to the table and was even prepared to leave the British legation without an experienced minister in an attempt to convince the Chinese that Tibet was of no real interest to Britain. This dealt a severe blow to Chinese prestige which Jordan, or anyone else with any deep knowledge of Chinese matters, would not have inflicted, since offering solutions calculated to boost their prestige had hitherto proved the surest way to persuade them to negotiate. Jordan had previously suggested, for example, that China should be encouraged to send her own mission to Lhasa in order to discuss the situation with the Tibetans themselves and so avoid the kind of damaging prevarication which had generated such confusion and resentment after the Lhasa Convention of 1904, which the Tibetans had largely ignored and which the Chinese had refused to sign. Despite warm support from India, Curzon had rejected this out of hand for reasons which he did not make clear at the time; this leads to the inescapable conclusion that he wanted proceed in his own way, with or without the support of the Peking legation, the Indian government, or the India Office.[7] When Jordan finally left Peking for the last time, in March 1920, he did so with the situation unresolved. Meanwhile, by that time and having got rid of what he saw as his greatest obstacle to progress, Curzon had decided to promote Jordan's idea for a mission to Tibet in principle.[8]

In February 1920 Jordan had informed London that Peking now

rejected the idea for a possible resumption of the talks about Tibet. The negotiations were thus deadlocked and remained so until April 1921, when hopes were once again raised by a new approach from Peking.[9]

During all this time Curzon had persisted with his attempts to initiate talks from London. Since his first failure with Alfred Sze things had gone from bad to worse, and Sze's successor, the sophisticated American-educated diplomat Wellington Koo, had proved even less responsive to the foreign secretary's arguments.[10]

With Jordan out of the frame, and in the belief that there had been a great change of events in China since May 1919, Curzon ordered Beilby Alston, his new British minister in Peking, to approach the Chinese for a new date for a resumption of the Tibetan talks. However, though he had worked for the China Service in London and Peking for many years and had been straining at the leash to receive this promotion, Alston had neither the confidence nor the expertise of his predecessor, and he felt very uncertain of his ability to persuade the Chinese to negotiate about Tibet. After a preliminary meeting at the Wai Chaio Pu he reported that the Chinese minister had seemed 'friendly' but 'unreliable' and he begged Curzon to continue to work towards holding the discussions in London. Alston's timidity gave Curzon an additional excuse to act independently, and he was not slow to take advantage of the opportunity provided.[11]

During the course of a subsequent interview with Wellington Koo at the Foreign Office in London in August 1921 the foreign secretary managed to find an excuse to present a statement of British intentions, accompanied by some explanatory observations of his own, which he hoped would be enough to convince the Chinese minister to go ahead with the talks in London. At the same time Alston approached Peking with copies of the statement and comments which Curzon had produced at the Foreign Office. To ensure that there could be no possible misunderstandings which might block the progress of the talks for a second time, the Japanese were also informed of what had taken place.[12]

Despite these careful preparations, however, Curzon's scheme was doomed to failure because the Peking government were no longer in any position to negotiate directly with the British. Wellington Koo was forced to reveal to him the shameful truth that China was now so riven by internal divisions that the Republicans had once again lost control of the country. In addition to Republican weakness, two new factors combined to block the progress of the talks. The first was Koo's announcement that his government was not prepared to discuss Tibet until after the conclusion of the Washington Conference, set to take place in 1922. The second was the attitude currently being adopted by the Dalai Lama who, having returned to Lhasa after a lengthy period of retreat and with Bell's encouragement, had declared that he did not want Tibetan affairs discussed so far away in Washington, where any decisions taken would have no relevance for the Tibetan people.

It was the moral force of this argument in the new post-war climate, which favoured international solutions to diplomatic problems, together with the fear that other nations like America might seek to intervene, that was the major factor in defeating Curzon's plan to revive Tibetan forward policy and which led to a British agreement to defer discussions about Tibet until after the Washington Conference had met.[13]

All attempts to reopen the talks after 1922 were also further rebuffed by the Chinese, but by this time the British were aware that the opportunity to settle their 'Tibetan problem' by diplomatic agreement had probably been lost forever as where Japan and America now competed for power in Asia. With hindsight it is possible to see an inevitability in Curzon's failure to reopen the Simla talks which was far wider than the inability of Britain and China to work together, one of the many factors mitigating against success was the growing power and influence of the Japanese after 1918.

Japanese forward policy

Japanese interest in Tibet had been known about in British circles long before 1918, but it was only after the First World War that it became a real source of concern to them as the Anglo-Japanese Alliance of 1902 began to crumble, and as the Japanese themselves began to be seen as rivals rather than allies in Asia.

Japanese agents had been operating inside Tibet long before Younghusband set out. After 1902 they had co-operated with the British, playing a useful part in the Great Game by passing on information about Russian activities in Central Asia. Like the Russian Buriats many Japanese were Buddhists and as such were able to travel freely inside Tibet as monks, often staying for long periods of study in Tibetan monasteries while acting informally as spies for the Japanese government.[14] After the surprise Japanese victory over Russia in the Russo-Japanese war of 1905 co-operation between Britain and Japan tended to be restricted to Tibet, partly because the wider Russian forward movement in Central Asia had been halted by the war, and partly because of deepening British distrust of Japanese activities in Mongolia.

Before 1905 the British had considered it quite proper to inform their Japanese allies about what was happening in Tibet as a matter of course. After the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907, however, this had been revised as Japanese interest in Mongolia became more pronounced, and as increasing Russian agitation about Japanese ambitions in their former sphere of interest led to their attempts to link Mongolia with Tibet in Anglo-Russian dialogues.[15] In an attempt to preserve the uneasy peace established by the Anglo-Russian Convention, therefore, the British Foreign Office was careful to limit the amount of information passed to the Japanese about continuing Russian activity in Central Asia.

The scale of Japanese involvement in Asia developed almost unnoticed.

As early as 1909 Jordan had begun to warn of a growing Japanese influence in China, but his attitude towards them was treated with caution in London since it was well known in diplomatic circles that his previous experience of Japanese tactics in Korea had made him overly distrustful of their motives.[16]

With the overthrow of the Manchu in 1911 Japanese foreign policy, always factional, became seriously divided over what might be their future role in China. Japanese Nationalists like Miyazaki Torazo had become closely associated with Chinese Nationalists like Sun Yet-sen, but Jordan began to be concerned about the behaviour of certain members of the Japanese military party in Peking who quickly became openly hostile towards Yuan Shih Kai and who had also been in Korea when Jordan was consul-general in Seoul. They had also proved adept at exploiting his support for the Republican president, with the result that a serious rift developed between Jordan and Ijuin Hikokichi, the Japanese minister to Peking. This rift created diplomatic problems for Jordan as Japanese influence increased inside China and their obvious opposition to Yuan deepened, exposing deep cracks in the Anglo-Japanese alliance. As Russo-Japanese tensions mounted in Mongolia the viability of continuing with the Anglo-Japanese alliance was further called into question, as was the wisdom of co-operating with Japan over Tibet.[17]

In 1913 Grey became aware that the Japanese were intriguing with a Tibetan official named Lungshar, the self-appointed guardian of four Tibetan boys who had been specially selected to receive an education in Britain as part of a wider plan to improve Anglo-Tibetan relations. The Japanese had apparently attempted to persuade the boys to reject the British offer in exchange for an education in Japan, and it was also known that the wily Lungshar, who was soon to prove profoundly ill-equipped for his role as guardian, had sought to profit financially from the Japanese offer.[18] Although a small incident in itself, it did have much deeper implications as the British now began to view their allies as rivals for Tibet. This belief was substantially confirmed in reports about the behaviour of Japanese officials during the run-up to the Simla Conference after it was discovered that they had approached the Chinese delegate, Ivan Chen, with a request that he supply them with detailed information about the course of the negotiations. Although Chen had refused to do this, Hardinge had become very alarmed by this blatant approach to the Chinese delegate and was not much reassured when Chen himself later claimed to be ‘uncertain of what his attitude should be towards the Japanese in the future’.[19]

The dilemma over what to do about the activities of the Japanese consular officials at Simla then created further friction between London and India when, at the India Office, Crewe became anxious that Hardinge might overreact to the situation by publicly denouncing the Japanese before the Foreign Office could approach Tokyo for clarification.

Although frayed tempers eventually cooled, the incident exposed great uncertainty about the future of the Anglo-Japanese alliance in British circles and alerted them to the possible future implications of any further Japanese involvement in Tibet. In Peking, British chargé d'affaires, Beilby Alston, had his own reasons for distrusting the Japanese and joined Jordan in criticising their behaviour.[20] As Europe slid into war in 1914 the need to court Japan in the interests of defence prevented the alliance from finally disintegrating, but the very circumstances of war also allowed the Japanese involvement in Tibet to progress even further.

In 1916 a further crisis emerged over a Japanese promise to supply the Tibetans with arms via the Japanese consulate in Calcutta. This offer had been made during the previous year in Lhasa by a Japanese emissary known as Aoki who had been sent there for the purpose. The Tibetans had naturally taken this opportunity to exploit the situation by writing to Bell in Sikkim with a request for British arms, hinting that if India would not supply them with weapons they could always get them from Japan. The Indian government now found themselves in an extremely delicate position. Firstly, they were in no position to supply the kind of arms on the scale requested, even though the Tibetans could argue that they had an obligation to do so under the terms of the bipartite agreement of July 1914. Secondly, they could not afford to upset their Japanese allies whose support in Asia was now vital to the war effort; also, they could not allow them to go ahead and supply Tibet in case much wider issues concerning transport emerged and Russia chose to become involved.[21]

As Crewe's successor at the India Office after 1915 Austen Chamberlain took a more positive approach to the situation than his predecessor, but had no previous experience of Tibetan affairs. He agreed with his new viceroy, Lord Chelmsford, that an immediate response was called for and decided to disallow the passage of Japanese arms through India on the grounds that it might be construed as a violation of wartime agreements to prohibit the movement of arms supplies. At the same time, however, he arranged for Bell to initiate separate talks with the Tibetans with a view to persuading them to drop their request for arms altogether, a project which many experienced India hands realised would be doomed to failure since the Tibetans were by now only too aware of their strong bargaining position. In the event Britain was forced to supply the Tibetans with guns and ammunition in order to prevent Japan from doing so, but the incident was a chilling indication to them of how far the Japanese were willing to go to involve themselves in Tibetan affairs, even at the cost of upsetting their British allies.[22]

When America entered the war in 1917 they exchanged notes with Japan defining the extent of their mutual special interests in China. At the India Office in London, Montagu argued that although this agreement need not necessarily pose a threat to existing British interests in China it might be wise to adhere to the arrangement as a third partner and to

include a formal reservation on the subject of Tibet. As British foreign secretary in 1917, Sir Arthur Balfour had agreed that it might be possible to agree upon Japan's right to have interests in 'certain parts of China' but that the Indian government would need to be sure that any tripartite arrangement with America and Japan would not upset existing Anglo-Tibetan relations. Although the British can be said to have taken the news of America's understanding with their Japanese allies quite philosophically, it did nevertheless expose their increasing anxiety about what future role Britain was to play in post-war China as it now seemed obvious to many that America and Japan planned to divide China up into spheres of influence to be shared out between themselves along traditional imperialist lines.[23]

In 1919 British fears about what Japan planned to do after the war were confirmed by the crisis generated by the May proposals when it seemed that their Japanese allies were attempting to block any resumption of Anglo-Chinese talks about Tibet. In a memo written on the day negotiations had broken down, R.H. Clive of the British legation exposed what he believed to be a concerted attempt by the Japanese press in Peking to prevent the talks continuing by deliberately misrepresenting the 'nature and scope' of the Tibetan talks and presenting British interests as malevolent.[24] Jordan had already reported the existence of a series of pamphlets accusing the British of scheming to enlarge Tibet by including within its boundaries part of Chinese Kansu, half of Sichuan, and parts of Yunnan and Kueichow. He had been particularly upset by the scale and vehemence of the press campaigns, which included articles in the Tokyo press as well as those in Peking, and he had taken the precaution of issuing a statement to Reuters refuting the allegations. By this time Jordan's personal antagonism towards the Japanese was widely known, as was his tendency to implicate them in Yuan's sudden death in 1916. His overt hostility towards them made it difficult for him to approach the Japanese in Peking for an explanation, although in this he had the full support of colleagues. His statement reflected the views of the British legation who believed that the entire campaign to discredit Britain had been orchestrated from Tokyo, and, although Clive himself admitted that he had no direct evidence to this effect, such strong condemnation of an ally was yet a further indication of how problematic future dealings with Japan were set to become.[25]

As foreign secretary in 1919 Curzon was faced with the problem of how to handle strengthening Japanese involvement in Chinese affairs and its damaging effect upon the Tibetan situation. His first approach to the Japanese ambassador to London failed when Chindra strenuously denied suggestions that Japanese interference in Chinese affairs had endangered the future of Anglo-Chinese talks on Tibet. He then attempted another approach, inviting the Chinese minister to the Foreign Office to hear the Japanese denials in person. When confronted in this way the Chinese

minister expressed great surprise at the Japanese reactions and agreed to telegraph Peking with the news. This further attempt to handle Chinese affairs from London was also doomed as events would soon show that both the Chinese and Japanese representatives in London were quite out of touch with the rapid changes of policy in their respective capitals, and Curzon's efforts to achieve consensus from London only served to complicate matters even further.[26]

During the course of conversations with Curzon at the Foreign Office, Chindra began to present arguments favouring Japan's economic and political claims to certain parts of the Chinese Empire. Mongolia was specifically mentioned, as were the 'hardships' endured by the Japanese during the course of 'recent wars' which had led them to set up 'barriers' against the possibility of future aggression in Asia, either from a recovered China or from Germany. The Japanese ambassador went on to explain at great length about how the Japanese saw their new international role, hinting darkly that the balance of power in Asia had now swung against Britain but in favour of Japan. When Curzon eventually pressed him for a response to allegations that his government had deliberately engineered the breakdown of Anglo-Chinese discussions about Tibet, Chindra 'broke in' on his questions to deny that Obata, the Japanese minister to Peking, whom the Foreign Office considered largely responsible for organising the anti-British press campaign in the city, was in fact entirely innocent of any involvement in the matter. Curzon began to suspect that he was not completely sincere, however, when Chindra then expressed his private view that Obata had been able to fool Tokyo because they seemed unaware of his political prejudices. He then denounced the behaviour of Japan's military party in Korea, which had previously provoked international condemnation, explaining that divisions within Japanese politics were preventing the formation of a coherent policy. After this conversation Curzon was extremely reluctant to advise going ahead with the Tibetan talks in case they provided more scope for even further division, and he was forced to abandon all hope of any early settlement to Anglo-Japanese tensions in Asia.[27]

Curzon's concern about the delayed resumption of the Tibetan talks was exacerbated by what seemed to him to be Chinese prevarication. Further interviews with the Chinese minister in London, in which Curzon had accused the Chinese of wilfully delaying the talks, had led him to conclude that this was now a greater obstacle to progress than Japanese imperialism. In Curzon's mind Jordan's antipathy towards the Japanese had not helped matters, and his removal had been one obvious way out of the impasse; but even after his retirement in March 1920 Jordan had continued to speak out against Japanese forward policy in his new role as special adviser on Chinese affairs at a special conference in London in the lead up to the Washington Conference. After 1920, however, Japanese attentions switched from Britain to America, now perceived by them as

their main rivals in China, and Anglo-Japanese tensions cooled down enough to make the Anglo-Chinese talks about Tibet seem possible if and when the Chinese could be persuaded to come to the negotiating table.[28]

Throughout this period of tensions between Britain and Japan, the Indian government and the India Office in London had experienced a transformation under the more forceful regime created by Chelmsford and Montagu. By 1919 these men had come to realise that if the Tibetan question was to be finally settled India would need to take a more active part in organising the negotiations, and they began to work towards a solution based upon an Indian initiative which would culminate in a British mission to Tibet.

The Bell mission, 1920–1921

In 1919 Lord Chelmsford had been concerned to learn of fresh fighting in East Tibet, but was even more alarmed by strong rumours that a Chinese mission from Kansu was already making its way to Lhasa under the leadership of a mysterious Tibetan Lama. Although Peking insisted that this was an independent provincial initiative launched by the ambitious General Ma, Jordan had confirmed that it seemed unlikely that Peking would be willing to trust such 'serious negotiations to a Tibetan Lama', however pro-Chinese he might appear to be.[29] Speculations about the nature of the mission blossomed as Bell and Bailey supplied further information from Sikkim, and as news of the Kansu mission spread across India there were calls for a rival British mission to be sent to Lhasa to establish a British presence in the city and to counter any possible Chinese attempt to initiate separate negotiations with the Dalai Lama.[30]

The Kansu mission provided Curzon with a very convenient excuse for further British involvement in Tibet, but unlike the Younghusband expedition of 1903 the British mission that was eventually despatched to Lhasa under the leadership of Charles Bell in late 1920 was no invasion force, although it did have the equally serious purpose of re-establishing British interests in Tibet over those of other outsiders. Curzon was back in harness, and this time he intended to use Charles Bell as his mouthpiece.

At first, and despite all rumours to the contrary, the Kansu mission was exposed as a very low-key affair. Bell finally discovered that it consisted of only two Lama's (Ku Lang Tsang and Lab Trulku), and two minor Chinese officials named Li Chung Lien and Chu Hsin. According to information supplied from Gyantse by David Macdonald, the Lamas were also accompanied by their wives and seemed quite ignorant of any deeper purpose to their mission other than an innocent desire to cement friendship links with the Tibetan people. As the mission continued to move closer to Lhasa, however, it became obvious to the Indian government that its main purpose was more sinister than had first appeared.

As time went on their suspicions were confirmed as more information

came to light about the nature of their discussions with the Dalai Lama. Bell became convinced that the Chinese officials travelling with the party had tried to persuade the Dalai Lama to allow two Tibetan representatives to return to Peking in order to continue the dialogue there.[31] What proved most alarming about all this from Chelmsford's point of view was the Dalai Lama's obvious reluctance to talk about the mission to his great friend Charles Bell, who eventually arrived in Lhasa with the British mission in November 1920 while the Kansu party were still in the city. It had been hoped that Bell might be able to make use of this old friendship to extract more information, but the Dalai Lama refused even to give him the expected date of the mission's departure, an indication to the British that the Tibetan leader was playing his cards very close to his chest and that this time the Tibetans were not going to be so easily placated by soothing words and formal treaties of friendship. It is a measure of the way in which Tibet had joined the modern post-war world that the Dalai Lama was now prepared to play the diplomatic game by western rules by deliberately withholding information, rather than by simply exiting from the situation and allowing a foreign invasion force to dictate terms which could later be conveniently ignored, as had been the case during the British invasion in 1903 and the Lhasa Convention that followed.[32]

After persistent questioning Bell eventually discovered that once aware that the British mission was impending the Dalai Lama had done all he could to urge the Kansu mission to leave Lhasa, and that in the three and a half months they were there they had apparently been an unwelcome and disturbing influence. The Dalai Lama's withdrawal for an extended period of intensive meditation between 1916 and 1919 had fuelled latent insecurities amongst his people which the pro-Chinese faction within the Lhasa government had been quick to exploit and which had been boosted by the presence of the Kansu mission. Fortunately for Bell, the Dalai Lama's very pro-British stance had managed to prevent any lasting damage to the Lhasa community and he remained very much in control of the situation when the British mission arrived.[33]

Before his recall for 'special duties' in January 1920 Bell had been retired for nearly nine months and was living quietly in Darjeeling studying Tibetan literature. His retirement had been necessitated by ill-health and other unspecified reasons, but he was understandably more than willing to go to Lhasa provided that it was on his own terms. In particular he wanted to offer practical help to the Tibetans in the form of arms. The Kansu mission and the fresh disturbances in East Tibet had made them very nervous about their future, and they were naturally anxious to test the reality of British promises to help them defend themselves in the event of renewed Chinese aggression.[34]

Once the decision to send Bell to Lhasa had been unanimously agreed there was an immediate disagreement between the Peking legation and the government of India about its proposed length of stay. In Peking, Alston

took the view that the longer Bell stayed on in Lhasa the better were Britain's chances of unsettling the Chinese enough to finally draw them to the negotiating table. Having sanctioned and supported the mission, however, Chelmsford was now beginning to worry about the longer-term implications of the visit for Anglo-Tibetan relations. It now occurred to him that the longer Bell stayed in Lhasa, the greater would be the opportunity for the Tibetans to press him for British arms.[35] Bell himself had already booked a return ticket to London for December 1920 and had made it clear that he did not wish to stay too long in Tibet, possibly because he knew that the Tibetans had made it clear that they wanted a permanent British representative in Lhasa and he was an obvious candidate for the post. Once he arrived in Lhasa, however, he had found himself quite unable to resist the warm entreaties to stay on and he remained in the capital until October 1921, almost a full year after his arrival.[36]

Bell's own account of his time in Lhasa provides a fascinating insight into his continuing friendship with the Dalai Lama, who insisted that he take up residence close to the Potala and who entertained him in places never before open to non-Tibetans, even extending an invitation to Mrs Bell to join him in order to meet and socialise with the wives of high-ranking Tibetan officials. Bell was so impressed by this hospitality, and so convinced of his own ability to influence the Dalai Lama, that he remained in the capital, despite the very serious threats to his own personal safety posed by violent disturbances and near-rebellion in Lhasa during the spring and summer of 1921. His reports about the cosmopolitan nature of life in the city were not only interesting in themselves but proved a vital source of information to the Indian government and to the British legation in Peking, whose confidence in the reliability of the reports they were receiving from Louis King in Ta-chien-lu was rapidly declining.[37]

Bell eventually left Lhasa on 19 October 1921, having delayed his departure, as he had his arrival, in order to leave on the day considered most auspicious by his hosts. Always far more in tune with Tibetan culture and aspirations than most of his contemporaries, his long association with the Dalai Lama had at last borne fruit for both men. During his time there Bell's own views about Tibet and her future role in the modern world had been transformed, and he left feeling very uneasy about British attempts to control Tibetan affairs believing that ultimately Tibet was more than capable of functioning as an independent state without help from the outside world.[38]

Despite the extravagant praise subsequently heaped on Bell, the achievements of his mission in purely British terms were trivial and were later strongly questioned, especially in India, where demands for his return had continued throughout his extended stay. As a public relations exercise the venture had undoubtedly been very successful in re-establishing Tibetan confidence in British support and eventually led, as Bell had

wanted, to the provision of arms to Tibet for use in the event of a Chinese attack. His personal reputation enhanced, he finally returned to India where he acted as an adviser to talks aimed at instituting a new and 'friendlier' British policy towards Tibet.[39]

Alastair Lamb has argued that although the Bell mission did not return with any formal treaty it did pave the way for great changes in Tibetan life, as a succession of British experts were called upon to help with the modest modernisation programme resumed by the Dalai Lama after his return from his three-year meditative retreat in 1919. However, the initiative for reform had come from inside Tibet itself, reflecting a change in attitude towards the west that predated Bell's visit. It had also been stimulated by help from other countries like Japan, and by promises of support and encouragement from America, each a factor in convincing the Dalai Lama that his country had a new International role and taking him away from the excessive isolationism that had drawn other countries to Tibet like a magnet.[40]

The Dalai Lama had been anxious to strengthen and modernise his army as one of his top priorities after his return to Lhasa in 1912, and although happy to accept British aid he was not averse to asking for help from other quarters. Japanese soldiers had been employed to train the Tibetan army for years, for example, and the close links between Mongolia and Tibet had allowed Japanese arms to reach Tibet via Mongolia. Many of the initiatives resulting from the Bell mission, such as the British school in Gyantse, the mining survey, and the granting of permission for the Everest expedition of 1924 to climb the mountain from the Tibetan side, were all short-lived and ended in failure.[41] What the mission did accomplish in British terms was a breathing space, enabling Peking, India and London to take stock of their position and reassess their Tibetan policy in the light of the new information Bell had supplied. The mission did not, as many hoped, result in the resumption of talks with China, but this was hardly surprising in view of the very serious tensions between the Republican government in Peking and the newly independent provincial governments of Yunnan and Sichuan which mitigated against any co-ordinated approach to foreign policy in this area.

East Tibet, 1919–1922

The treaties of Chamdo and Rongbasta had enabled the Sino-Tibetan frontier to settle into a long period of comparative peace, but rumours of disturbances persisted. These were largely due to the exaggerated accounts from agents employed by both the India Service and the China Service who were often simply observing provincial troop movements as tensions between Yunnan and Sichuan mounted.[42] Between 1918 and 1922 various accusations of Tibetan aggression were made by China, and it was certainly true that a strong Tibetan presence had been maintained

on this frontier in these years, made even more formidable by the modernisation of the Tibetan army and by the supply of superior arms from Japan and, after 1921, from Britain. The situation was further complicated for the British by their inability to make direct contact with the various forces involved since by 1919 it was clear that the Peking government had little or no control over the activities of the provincial governments of Yunnan and Sichuan, whose warring armies were now believed to be the main cause of the frontier disturbances.[43]

Frontier tensions in East Tibet had also been generated by statements from General Ma in which he voiced his own opposition to the negotiated boundary and to the Simla proposals. His behaviour had also served to antagonise Peking and Sichuan, making the Kansu mission of 1919 seem just as sinister to them as it had to the government of India.[44] In addition, the modernisation of the Tibetan army, organised very successfully from Lhasa by the Dalai Lama and Tsarong, his commander-in-chief, meant that it was now fulfilling expectations, and the Tibetans were continuing to win back territory lost to the Chinese in East Tibet. In May 1920, for example, the Nepalese resident in Lhasa, who was monitoring Tibetan movements on behalf of his own government, had reported that Tibetan soldiers had occupied the Lakaung Lama monastery on the frontier and were 'busy mobilising troops' there. And, from Ta-chien-lu, Louis King reported on the 'unpopularity' of the new Tibetan administrations in Draya, Chamdo and Markham, where the local populations were said to be clamouring for a return to the less-intrusive Chinese rule.[45]

In London, Curzon tended to dismiss reports of Tibetan aggression as exaggerated or simply as isolated incidents generated by the presence of soldiers in the region, being unwilling to concede that the Tibetans were capable or even desirous of organising a mass mobilisation programme in East Tibet. He may have been remembering the Tibet which Younghusband had invaded, but his own failure to acknowledge the changes that had occurred in the Dalai Lama's political philosophy since 1904 were at the heart of his marked reluctance to offer the Tibetans more positive support in retaining their independence. He had, however, taken advantage of Bell's presence in Lhasa during 1920 and 1921 to try to validate Chinese reports of Tibetan aggression which were being passed on by King in Ta-chien-lu, as well as from other less orthodox sources.[46]

The fact that Bell had been quite unable to supply the kind of detailed information requested about the real state of affairs in East Tibet from his relatively isolated position in Lhasa had never been truly accepted in London. During his time in the city there had been rumours and counter-rumours of an imminent Chinese invasion, and Bell himself had been bombarded with requests for arms from the Dalai Lama. In such circumstances it would have been most unlikely that he would have been told of any Tibetan military successes at a time when the Lhasa authorities would

have thought it more expedient to portray themselves as helpless victims of Chinese aggression.[47]

Lack of confidence in King, who by this time had come to be regarded as seriously unprofessional in his approach, was now a major source of concern to his superiors at the Peking legation. King had resumed his post at Ta-chien-lu after Teichman finally left Tibet to return to Peking in April 1919. Although he had opened and successfully manned the post between 1913 and 1916, his second term of duty was filled with problems. Despite the 'barnlike rooms' and 'icy draughts' of the remote and uninviting consulate and the unnerving presence of the Chinese frontier commissioner, whom even the austere Teichman had described as 'not entirely normal', King welcomed this return to duty as an opportunity to advance his career in the China Service. However, circumstances had changed in his absence and now he found his integrity undermined by the complete refusal of his superiors to either believe or accept many of his recommendations. Furthermore, his late marriage to a high-ranking Tibetan led to accusations of instability which effectively put paid to any chance of further promotion. In 1922 he was finally 'removed' from Ta-chien-lu in disgrace, although his reports remained balanced and lucid to the last and were certainly no wilder in tone than those he had issued during his first period of service and for which he had been commended. Inherent racism and a campaign waged against him by Miles Lampson, the new British minister, and his staff at the British legation, almost certainly destroyed his career – although at least part of the reason for this campaign was related to the internal politics of the Foreign Service and had little to do with King's behaviour as such. He had previously been very enthusiastic, if a trifle unrealistic, about his role in East Tibet and had even courted disaster in 1919 by offering to lead the British mission to Lhasa himself. His chances of ever doing this were inevitably ruled out by his lowly status in the Service – he never even gained promotion to consul-general – and by opposition from Bell and other members of the India Service who naturally wanted their own man for this honour in order to ensure that they retained control of British Tibetan policy. Hostility from Bell and others undoubtedly helped to undermine his credibility even further and his attempts to promote the opening of a second frontier post at Atunzi in Yunnan from which to monitor the East Tibetan area more effectively for the China Service were firmly rejected, as were his offers to act as mediator in Sino-Tibetan disputes after 1919.[48]

This adverse reaction to King's sincere attempts to settle the frontier was also partly due to a strong British desire to extricate themselves from East Tibet, now viewed as a dangerous trouble spot as well as a barrier to Anglo-Chinese understanding. The decision to replace Teichman with King was, in itself, a reflection of the fact that Ta-chien-lu had reverted to a low priority posting and, after King's departure in 1922, no British consular official resided there, although unofficial reports were received from Paul Sherap and the Chengdu staff who occasionally visited the city.[49]

The new Tibetan policy

The confused situation in East Tibet had obstructed effective communication about the area between Britain and China, but it was only one small part of the problem. A major factor in preventing a renewal of negotiations was Britain's inability to formulate a coherent Tibetan policy after 1918. This was due to the results of a rapid turnover of British personnel in the immediate post-war period and to a general lack of information about Tibet after the Dalai Lama's return in 1912.

In 1918 Britain had continued a policy of 'sterilisation' in Tibet. This had been based upon the concept of isolating her as far as possible from all contact with other nations in the hope of 'protecting' her from 'undesirable' influences in accordance with their bipartite agreement of July 1914. During the run up to the Washington Conference in May 1920 Alston issued a series of policy statements challenging this 'Simla position' in which he argued that, since the pace of world events would eventually force Tibet to open her doors to the rest of the world, this isolationism was now unrealistic, and Britain's future role should be to promote gradual change at a pace comfortable for the Tibetans themselves.[50] Although Alston's motives were still related to British attempts to persuade the Chinese to negotiate over Tibet, her approach to the issue had changed and marked a real breakthrough in British policy. This was almost certainly also a reflection of Curzon's strong influence at the Foreign Office since, for the first time, the China Service were willing to concede the need for a permanent British representative in Lhasa.

Alston himself was far less fearful of the Japanese presence inside Tibet than were many of his colleagues, but he believed that Japanese and American approaches to the Tibetans might be better monitored if they came via India rather than by way of China or Mongolia, where Japanese influence was very pronounced. In order to promote this he argued that the Indian route to Tibet should be reopened after being closed to all international traffic since 1913, and he recommended that since the settlement of what was now referred to as the 'Tibetan Question' was now urgent it could be accomplished without China if necessary. Alston was not alone in suspecting that the pressure of international events would in any case determine the extent to which Tibet would be forced into congress with the outside world.[51]

Alston's approach to Tibet represents a complete turnaround in China Service thinking since Jordan's day when the country was regarded as a threat to Anglo-Chinese relations. Indian attempts to control the Tibetan negotiations had previously been viewed by them as a major obstacle in their attempts to mend bridges with China, but now the China Service was recommending that India handle the Tibetan situation and that China be removed from the equation altogether if necessary.[52]

Bell's mission had also made a great impact upon the policy of the

government of India. This was partly because Bell himself had continued to act as their adviser, even after his official retirement from the Politicals. He now advocated a more liberal approach to Tibet, based upon his own experiences in Lhasa which had convinced him that it would be unwise to station a permanent British representative in the city on the grounds that such a person could not be easily protected in an atmosphere where the possibility of violent conflict was ever present. This in itself marked a dramatic departure from the position adopted when Curzon had been viceroy, to which Bell himself had wholeheartedly subscribed, and which had been one of the original objectives of the Younghusband expedition. Moving on from that position even further Bell now proposed that the Yatung mart should also be closed and that proposals to establish another mart at Chamdo in East Tibet should be abandoned.[53]

In many ways this complete change of heart was an acknowledgement that British power and influence in Asia was waning, but it was also based upon a more tolerant and humane approach to weaker nations that was itself a product of the 'new diplomacy' of the post-war period. Curzon himself shared some of these sentiments, but, unlike Bell, who was always more predisposed towards understanding the needs of the Tibetans, he rejected the concept of a 'new diplomacy' in favour of a more traditional view of the 'Tibetan question', arguing that a 'firm line' and an 'open attitude' was needed in any future dealings with China about the issue.[54]

The effect of this policy change within the various branches of the British Foreign Service did not lead to the kind of conflict that had developed in the past, and by 1921 a general consensus was reached that the status of Tibet could be settled without recourse to China. By 1922 British policy towards Tibet had reached a solution based upon Britain's need to settle her wider Asian affairs in the general climate of her own declining status in the post-war world, highlighted by the conference in Washington. In this new world the 'problem' of Tibet would fade into relative insignificance as the main aim of British policy in Asia was reduced to one of basic survival.

Conclusion

The Younghusband expedition had a profound and long-term effect on Tibet and Britain, exposing Tibet to Chinese invasion and international scrutiny and acting as a catalyst for change in British Tibetan policy. Reluctantly sanctioned by the British Foreign Office in the hope of finally settling trade disputes on the Indian frontier with Tibet, it had quickly gathered momentum following China's refusal to accept the Lhasa Convention, disrupting Anglo-Chinese relations as China began to claim Tibet as part of the Chinese Empire.

There was a sad inevitability about the quadrilateral conflict that developed within the British Foreign Service over the Tibetan question between 1904 and 1922. The 'problem' of Tibet tested the resources of all four branches of the Service during this time because each had a different view of the situation. For the Foreign Office in London Tibet was but a small part of its wider Asian policy which aimed at countering Russian interest there and which relied upon the maintenance of harmonious relations with China in the interests of commercial profit. During Sir Edward Grey's long tenure as Foreign Secretary, the Far Eastern Department of the Foreign Office was given great flexibility in its dealings with China, and his protection also ensured that the British legation in Peking was allowed more freedom to contribute to Tibetan policy than would normally have been the case. As British minister in Peking between 1906 and 1920, Sir John Jordan exercised great influence in decisions involving Tibet, both inside the British Service and within the Chinese Foreign Office. His friendship with Yuan Shih Kai and other leading Chinese diplomats, and his appointment as doyen in 1911, enabled the Tibetan issue to be discussed much more frequently and more directly than would otherwise have been the case. In addition, the peculiar circumstances created by world war in 1914 gave him a unique opportunity to conduct his own forward policy in East Tibet, although his negative attitude towards the Japanese during this time also helped to hasten his retirement, especially after Lord Curzon became Foreign Secretary in 1919.

The problem which Tibet presented for India was quite different. For the Indian government control over Tibet was primarily related to the

wider issue of frontier security, although there was always a continuing interest taken in the development of Himalayan trade from which the depleted coffers of the Indian Treasury almost certainly benefited. After 1907, when the danger from overt Russian aggression had largely subsided, the threat of Chinese infiltration became an issue in itself, leading successive Indian viceroys to interest themselves in East Tibet, where the ability of the China Service to monitor Chinese infiltration after 1906 was tested, and eventually led to fierce competition between some members of the China Service and India Service working on the spot.

The pull and push of priorities over Tibet at various times, which generated so much tension within and between the various branches of the British Foreign Service, also allowed individuals to exert considerable influence over policy at different times. In the case of Jordan and Satow in Peking this influence continued even after they left office when they were asked to act as advisers on Tibetan matters. As viceroy of India, and later as foreign secretary, Curzon's views inevitably dominated much of the thinking of those keen to promote a forward policy in Tibet, which had begun when he launched the Younghusband expedition in 1903. His ability to directly influence Tibetan policy continued even after he left India, when he made sure that he was kept well informed of key developments, and culminated in his appointment as foreign secretary in 1919.

Lord Minto's ability to directly influence Tibetan policy after 1905 has been seriously underestimated. If inevitably minimised by the Liberal non-involvement policy fronted by Lord Morley at the India Office, it did not prevent him from intervening effectively to keep British interests in Tibet alive whenever possible. The fading interest in Tibetan forward policy during Lord Hardinge's viceroyalty may be explained partly by his defensive approach to the issue in his dealings with the India Office and the Peking legation in the continuing debate over control of frontier policy after 1910. The mutual antagonism between Jordan and Hardinge, and the latter's presence at the Foreign Office after 1916, may also have been a factor in promoting Jordan's fall from grace, but ultimately, though powerful individuals came and went, the conduct of policy was determined by wider events in Asia to which only the Foreign Office in London were equipped to respond.

One of the recurring themes of this book has involved the exploration of the conflict between those people charged with the implementation of policy on the spot and the increasing number of experts drafted into the Foreign Office to help deal with the burgeoning workload. The Curzonians working at the trade marts inside Tibet were among the first casualties of this struggle, but the China Service also had its victims, not the least of which was Jordan himself who by challenging the opinions of ex-viceroys like Curzon and Hardinge made himself powerful enemies. There were also smaller victims like Louis King, who threatened to destabilise the system by falling in love with a Tibetan woman, and Frederick O'Connor

and William Campbell, who each found themselves embroiled in petty wrangles that threatened their careers.

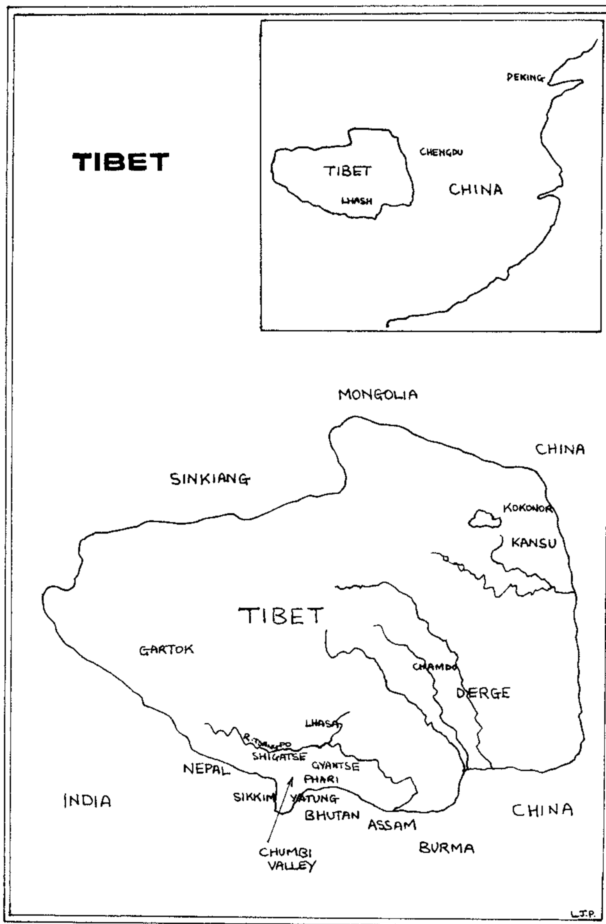
Underpinning many of the disputes were arguments about the promotion of trade which had been lucrative enough to ensure that trade agents like David Macdonald remained inside Tibet long after the evacuation of Chumbi had rendered them politically unviable. The cost of protecting them was willingly undertaken by the government of India before 1911 because Tibet was seen as part of a wider plan to develop the commercial and political potential of the Himalayan region as a whole, evidenced by Claude White's plans for Sikkim and Bhutan and reflected in O'Connor's Report of 1906. After 1911 many of those ambitious schemes had to be abandoned, but interest in the commercial potential of Tibet never really disappeared and resurfaced in Bell's recommendations for the Tibetan mining survey of 1921.

British misconceptions about the nature of Tibetan society and the respective roles played by the Dalai Lama and the Panchen Lama were a very important source of conflict in this period. Until the Dalai Lama's exile in India between 1910 and 1912, most information about Tibet had come from contact with the Panchen Lama who did not always see eye to eye with the Lhasa authorities or with the Dalai Lama himself. His Indian exile was an important factor enabling the Tibetan ruler to be respected outside Tibet as a powerful figure in his own right and helped to persuade the British Foreign Office to accept that his country was capable of functioning as an independent sovereign state. Charles Bell's mission to Lhasa in 1920 marked a watershed in Britain's relations with Tibet, and for the first time since 1902 the Dalai Lama was approached directly as the ruler of Tibet without reference to China. In a sense, therefore, Bell's mission brings the wheel full circle in British terms because the need to establish closer links with Tibet as a means of ensuring the safety of India's borders had been a major motivation for the decision to send Younghusband to Lhasa.

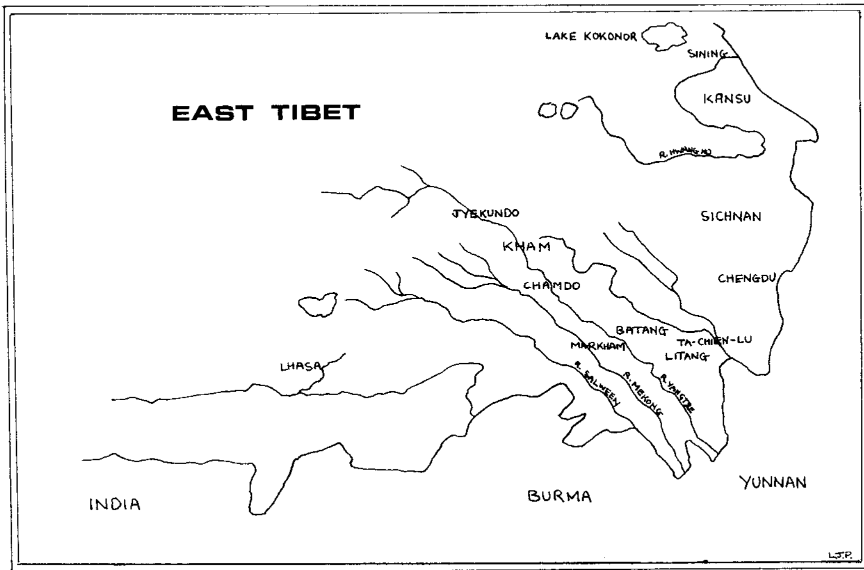
From the Tibetan point of view the British clearly lost face between 1903 and 1922. Their attempts to court the Dalai Lama were often the subject of international scrutiny, which the Tibetans were able to exploit to their own advantage in an attempt to establish their right to independence in a world increasingly dominated by arrangements between western powers. Britain's inability to compete with either Russia or Japan in acquiring access to Tibet without force was also a serious handicap to their credibility. Apart from a handful of individuals like Charles Bell, who worked hard to establish a rapport with leading Tibetans, including the Dalai Lama, there was no one who could compete with the Russian Buriat monk Agvan Dorjiev, who had managed to earn the Dalai Lama's trust enough to exercise some real political influence in Tibet. Although the decision to seek sanctuary in India in 1910 was taken entirely on the basis of the disposition of a goat's entrails, the willingness to trust Britain

enough to enter into a formal treaty relationship after 1912 was entirely a matter of expediency and was the result of the political acumen acquired by the Dalai Lama while he was in India.

Whilst the Tibetan ruler had learned how to adapt to the changing world the British were never able to accept that they could fulfil any purpose in Tibet beyond that of protecting their own interests in India. Despite its close proximity to Tibet the Indian government could never compete for access with other Central Asian powers, including Russia, and were constantly thwarted by Chinese attempts to do so after the British invasion, and the Lhasa Convention that followed, exposed Tibet to unwarranted Chinese aggression. Indian treaties with Tibet before 1912 were made under duress and were usually accompanied by promises of



Map of Tibet.



Map of East Tibet.

support which never fully materialised. The mutual antagonism between Christian missionaries and Buddhist monks often frustrated British consular officials by denying them diplomatic access to the great monasteries of East Tibet, where important decisions were often taken. Since there were few consular officials covering this vast region, and a small but very determined missionary presence there, this became a serious problem and one frequently identified in the reports of consular officials like Eric Teichman. In some cases, however, missionaries proved the only useful source of information, and those who worked for the British Foreign Service as agents often risked their lives in the process.

British attempts to retain prestige inside Tibet were significantly undermined by the traditional ties between the Chinese living in East Tibet and the powerful Drepung monastery near Lhasa. Many of the monks in Drepung, for example, came originally from East Tibet and still had families they wanted to keep safe living there. All British attempts to persuade them that the Chinese would endanger their freedom or jeopardise Tibetan independence therefore fell on deaf ears. In Lhasa itself the situation was often so confused that the Dalai Lama himself had to struggle to retain political control.

Britain's Tibetan 'problem' was essentially one of their own making since it was based upon a false perception of what constituted control in this vast and inaccessible country. Although by 1922 a few Tibetan experts appreciated the nature of the intricate network of alliances and informal

understandings that governed the conduct of policy in Central Asia, there was still great ignorance about the importance of these arrangements. This was partly the result of deliberate misinformation supplied by the Chinese and by the Tibetans themselves, but was also often the result of their own failure to appreciate the nuances of diplomatic etiquette other than in purely western terms.

British interest in Tibet by its very nature thus helped to create the problems leading to the Chinese invasion of 1959. Without the Lhasa Convention of 1904, the Chinese adhesion treaty of 1906, the Trade Regulations Act of 1908, and the Anglo-Tibetan bipartite agreement of 1914, Chinese interest in what they had hitherto regarded as a remote and backward region, might not have been so suddenly and dramatically awakened, and the costly full-scale invasion of what they had previously regarded as a vassal state on the very edge of their vast empire might have been avoided. The 1910 invasion, which could not have been sustained after the Manchu collapse of 1911, only lingered to embarrass the new Republican government, which in order to save face now found that it had to find a suitable role for Tibet in the new Republic. At least part of the problem for them was the way in which their involvement with East Tibet, seen as part of a much wider plan for the creation of Sikang, became inextricably tied to their belief in the need for formal Chinese control over the whole of Tibet. Their inability to curb the enthusiasm of the provincial governments of Sichuan and Yunnan, and their efforts to avoid losing face by admitting this weakness, also had implications for their relationship with Britain as well as for their own status under international law. Fear of once again being at the mercy of foreign powers, as had been the case after the Boxer Rebellion of 1900 for example, dominated Republican thinking on this issue and was partly responsible for their withdrawal from the Simla Conference in 1913.

There can be no justification for the Chinese occupation of Lhasa in 1910, but the British must shoulder some of the blame for exposing Tibet to an aggressive Chinese forward policy after 1904 and for encouraging the Chinese to redefine their relations with Tibet in western terms. Over and above this, Britain's reluctance to honour promises to support Tibet under the terms of the bipartite agreement of July 1914, in the face of continuing Chinese aggression, left the country once more vulnerable to attack.

After Bell left Lhasa in 1921 Tibet again began to withdraw from entanglements with the outside world. Had the British been prepared to act on their promise of support at this time Tibet might have been more inclined to take her place in the wider international community, with all the protection that might have afforded.

In all her dealings with Tibet between 1900 and 1922 there was never any real intention on Britain's part to try to take over the running of the country or to interfere with her religion. Indeed, many of the people who

served in Tibet were quite captivated by the culture and grew to admire and love the people with the result that many important and long-lasting friendships were formed. However, British interest posed a very real threat to Tibetan security. The desire to exploit Tibet's commercial potential for the benefit of British India and the tendency to use the country as a pawn in Britain's wider Asian policy – which always placed Anglo-Chinese interests far above those of Tibet – helped to create the very conditions that made the Chinese invasions possible. If Tibet is to salvage her national identity and survive in the twenty-first century as an autonomy, therefore, British governments have, at the very least, a moral obligation to try to support her.

Notes

1 The Younghusband invasion, 1900–1904

1 Eric Teichman, 'Introduction', *Travels of a Consular Officer in Eastern Tibet*, Cambridge, 1922.

2 The Gelug-pa or Yellow Hat sect were formed by Tsong Kapa (1357–1419), later reincarnated as the First Dalai Lama. Under the Fifth Dalai Lama (known as the Great Fifth), the older Red Hat order was driven out of central Tibet and their influence mainly restricted to eastern Tibet after 1656.

3 Minto Papers, MSS 12594, Satow to Curzon, 20/11/02.

4 When British expedition leader Augustus Margary was murdered near the Sino-Burmese border the Chinese were forced to agree to compensation, and as one of the conditions of the Chefoo Convention which followed in 1876 the Manchu had reluctantly agreed to issue passports to a British overland mission to Lhasa. This had eventually been followed up in 1886 when a mission under the leadership of Colman MacCaulay, organised by the Indian government, was cancelled on the eve of its departure. The situation was further complicated from the British side by the fact that Margary had been a member of the China Consular Service, leading to some friction with the Indian government. For more information about this see Sir John Jordan, *The Journey of Augustus Raymond Margary from Shanghai to Bhamo and Back to Manwyene*, Macmillan and Co. Ltd, London, 1876. W. Palace, 'Sir John Jordan and the Burma Border, 1906–12', *Asian Affairs*, Oct. 1999.

5 A good account of this early period of Tibetan history may be found in Christopher Beckwith's book, *The Tibetan Empire in Central Asia: A History of the Struggle for Great Power among Tibetans, Turks, Arabs and Chinese During the Early Middle Ages*, Princeton, N.J., 1987.

6 Aghvan Dorjiev was a Buriat from Eastern Siberia and, like the Dalai Lama, a member of the Gelug-pa sect. A distinguished scholar in his own right, he attended Drepung monastery in Lhasa during the 1860s. By 1890 he had risen to become a personal tutor to the young Thubten Gyatso. In spring 1900 he travelled to Odessa, via India, attracting the attention of the Indian government, and leading to speculation that he was working as a spy for the Russians. He remained the Thirteenth Dalai Lama's lifelong friend and adviser. In 1934 he fell victim to one of Stalin's persecutions and died in a Soviet prison in January 1938.

7 Kawaguchi wrote his own account of his travels which was published in English translation in 1909 as *Three Years in Tibet*, Kathmandu, Ratna Pustak Bhandar, 1979.

8 *Chö-yön*: *'chö'*, meaning deity; *'yön'*, meaning dispenser of offerings to religious persons. The *cho-yon* was a private arrangement between the Dalai Lamas and

the Manchu emperors. Such arrangements were not unusual in Central Asia, and a similar understanding existed between the Dalai Lamas and the head of the Buddhist Church in Mongolia.

9 For a good account of these early contacts with Tibet, see George Woodcock, *Into Tibet: The Early British Explorers*, London, 1971.

10 Curzon had already travelled extensively in Central Asia before becoming viceroy and in 1889 had published his influential book, *Russia in Central Asia*, in which he identified Russia as a positive threat to British interests in the area.

11 Religious links between the Ninth Panchen Lama and the Thirteenth Dalai Lama were potentially very strong since the former acted as spiritual adviser to the latter and, as such, held a very powerful position in the Tibetan hierarchy. However, closeness in age acted as a natural barrier which helped to destabilise the political situation inside Tibet, as did the continuing antagonism between the three major monasteries of Sera, Ganden and Drepung located nearest to Lhasa. While Ganden and the warrior monks of Sera were fiercely anti-Chinese, the larger Drepung monastery, which drew many of its monks from East Tibet, tended to be much more sympathetic towards Chinese involvement in Tibet.

12 A good account of this first meeting on the north-west frontier in 1892, and its implications for Younghusband's subsequent career, may be found in Patrick French, *Younghusband: The Last Great Imperial Adventurer*, p. 100, HarperCollins, London, 1994.

13 For example, Frederick O'Connor collected Tibetan folk tales, Dr Waddell, studied Lamaism and also investigated and published a detailed report on the location of gold mines in Tibet. Scientific experts, like Mr Hayden of the Geological Survey and Major Prain, director of the Botanical Gardens in Calcutta, were also drafted in from time to time during the early stages of the invasion. Still the most concise account of the British invasion of Tibet may be found in Peter Fleming's, *Bayonets to Lhasa*, Rupert Hart-Davis, London, 1962. For an interesting re-evaluation, see P.L. Mehra, *The Younghusband expedition: An Interpretation*, Asia Publishing House, 1968.

14 For an interesting study of British parliamentary reactions to the Younghusband Invasion, see A.M.A. Hull, 'Col. Younghusband's Mission to Lhasa, 1904', MA dissertation, Durham University, 1989.

15 Perceval Landon of *The Times* newspaper and Edmund Candler of the *Daily Mail* were two of the journalists accompanying the invasion who each published their own, unique interpretation of events. See Perceval Landon, *Lhasa*, London, 1906, and Edmund Candler, *The Unveiling of Lhasa*, Thomas Nelson & Sons Ltd, London, 1905.

16 Younghusband himself deeply regretted the incident, which he believed had been unavoidable and for which he was subsequently firmly rebuked. Sir Francis Younghusband, *India and Tibet*, pp. 164–5, John Murray, London, 1910.

17 The November telegram read: 'In view of the conduct of Tibetans His Majesty's Government feel that action must be taken. They therefore sanction an advance to Gyantse but are clearly of the opinion that this should not lead to any permanent occupation or any intervention in Tibetan affairs. The advance should be made for the sole purpose of obtaining satisfaction and, as soon as reparation has been made there should be a withdrawal. His Majesty's Government are not interested in setting up a permanent mission neither are they interested in forcing trace facilities' (Secretary of State to Curzon, 6/11/03).

18 Gartok was the ancient administrative capital of western Tibet. Gyantse was the third largest town in Tibet and also the closest to Lhasa. Yatung was situated in the Chumbi valley and was the closest to the Indian frontier.

19 For Younghusband's own version of events, see Younghusband, *India and Tibet*,

pp. 275–9. After Tibet he continued to work with the Politicals as resident in Kashmir until his retirement from the Service in 1910. Between 1914 and 1918 he provided war intelligence for the Indian government, and in 1919 he became president of the Royal Geographical Society. He remained greatly influenced by Tibetan mysticism to the end of his life. His tomb bears the relief of a Tibetan statue given to him by the Ti Rimpoche on the day he left Lhasa.

20 CD5240, Further Papers Relating to Tibet, 1906–1910, 62, Undersec. of State I.O. to Undersec. of State F.O., 24/1/06.

21 Younghusband, *India and Tibet,* pp. 280–6. Younghusband was clearly under the impression that signing inside the Potala itself would carry more weight with the Tibetans, a conviction further strengthened by Tibetan attempts to have the treaty signed at the *amban*'s Lhasa residence. In fact this was not the case, for although the Dalai Lama had left the official seal with the Ti Rimpoche it was his person who was revered and not the trappings of the State. Yet another cultural difference not fully appreciated by the British.

22 Younghusband, *India and Tibet,* pp. 240–1; 314–16. Curzon had left India on leave in April 1904 and Lord Ampthill had replaced him as acting viceroy. Ampthill had initially welcomed the Lhasa Convention as a triumph for British diplomacy. Within days, however, criticism from London threatened to turn it into a diplomatic disaster. Curzon returned to India in November 1904 only to resign the viceroyalty a year later, following a protracted dispute with Lord Kitchener.

23 The Ti Rimpoche (Lamoshar Lobsang Gyaltsen) was a well-respected elderly Lama and chief abbot of Ganden monastery near Lhasa. Younghusband thought him a moderate self-effacing man who was popular in the city except with the authorities at Drepung monastery who were most opposed to the Dalai Lama's policies. Younghusband, *India and Tibet,* pp. 270–80, 290.

24 Yu Tai had been appointed in 1903 by the Manchu government as a new broom in Lhasa. His reluctance to take up his post as *amban* had been reflected in the fact that it had taken him fifteen months to reach the city. He was there to greet Younghusband in August 1904 and his helpfulness and comparative sophistication endeared him to the British, although his own government clearly regarded him as a liability and were later very critical of his willingness to co-operate with Younghusband.

25 For a full examination of the legality of the Lhasa Convention and its status under international law, see Walt van Praag, *The Status of Tibet: History, Rights and Prospects in International Law,* pp. 36–7, Wisdom Publications, London, 1987.

26 Francis Younghusband, *India and Tibet,* p. 90 (ed. Pheobe Folger), Book Faith, Delhi, 1998.

27 George Bogle had been invited to Tashilunpho by the Sixth Panchen Lama himself. His mission was to assess the prospects for future trade with Tibet and to investigate Tibetan customs. When he returned with a present of powdered gold western interest in Tibet increased dramatically.

28 For a concise account of the Siege of Peking, see Peter Fleming, *The Siege of Peking,* Rupert Hart-Davis, London, 1959.

29 Jordan Papers, 350/15, Jordan to Langley, 12/5/16.

30 Premen Addy, *Tibet on the Imperial Chessboard: The Making of British Policy Towards Lhasa, 1899–1925,* Academic Publishers, New Delhi, 1984.

31 See, for example, Kenneth Latourette, *A History of Christian Missions in China,* Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1929.

32 See, for example, Younghusband, *India and Tibet (1910),* p. 146. Extracts from O'Connor's diary for the period July 1903–April 1904 in *The British Invasion of Tibet/Colonel Younghusband/1904,* Uncovered Editions, London Stationery Office, 1999.

2 Masterly inactivity: Britain's non-involvement policy, 1905–1908

1 Sir John Morley, Viscount of Blackburn. Editor of *The Fortnightly Review*, Gladstonian Liberal and MP for Blackburn, Lancs. from 1899. Served two terms as chief secretary for Ireland under Gladstone between 1886 and 1905 and became secretary of state for India, 1905–1910.

Sir Gilbert John Murray Kyn Kymond, Fourth Earl of Minto. Between 1867 and 1882 he served in a number of military campaigns with the army before becoming first military secretary to the governor-general of Canada between 1883 and 1885 and then governor-general of Canada between 1891 and 1904. He was viceroy of India between 1905 and 1910.

2 Sir Pierre Louis Napoleon Cavaglari, British representative in Kabul, had been murdered during an attack on the British compound in 1879.

3 Government of India Act of 1858. This had transferred the responsibility for running the British administration in India from the East India Company to the Crown. Failure to define the respective roles of viceroy and secretary of state adequately resulted in misunderstandings which generated tension between the India Office in London and the viceregal administration in India.

4 Almost without exception political agents appointed to the Tibetan marts had been associated with the Younghusband invasion and were loyal to Curzon.

5 John Claude White (1853–1918) transferred from the Royal Engineering Corps to the Politicals. In 1888 he served with the expeditionary force to Sikkim and in the following year became P.O. Sikkim. Appointed commissioner to the Younghusband expedition in 1903, he returned to find his workload as P.O. Sikkim significantly increased to include Tibet as well as Sikkim and Bhutan. He was retired in 1908 and recorded his observations in his book, *Sikkim and Bhutan: Twenty-one Years on the North-East Frontier, 1887–1908*, Edward Arnold, London, 1909.

Lieutenant-Colonel Sir William Frederick Travis O'Connor (1870–1943). After making several journeys to Sikkim between 1895 and 1897, he became a pioneer correspondent reporting events on the north-east and north-west frontiers of India. After a meeting with Curzon at Simla in 1901 he joined the Younghusband expedition as Tibetan interpreter. He drafted the Lhasa Convention and in 1905 became trade agent at Gyantse. He wrote of his experiences in his book, *On the Frontier and Beyond: A Record of Thirty Years' Service*, John Murray, London, 1931.

6 Minto Papers, MSS12636, p. 65, 'Visit of the Tashi Lama of Shigatse to India'. India Office Library. L/P&S/10/7250, 'Relations With the Tashi Lama', 30/6/09.

7 Further Papers Relating to Tibet, CD5240, 57, Viceroy to Sec. of State, 6/12/05. White, *Sikkim and Bhutan: Twenty-One Years on the North-East Frontier, 1887–1908*, pp. 49–50. O'Connor, *On the Frontier*, pp. 74–105.

8 O'Connor, *On the Frontier*, pp. 100–1. According to O'Connor's account the Panchen Lama caused great amusement in British ranks when he sent his secretary to look behind the front lines of troops, apparently unwilling to believe that such a large number could be mustered for parade.

9 L/P&S/17/10/7250, 901, Viceroy to Secretary of State, 16/1/06; 906, Sec. of State to Viceroy, Tel., 2/5/06. For a more intimate account of this interview, see Mary, Countess of Minto, *India Under Minto and Morley, 1905–10*, pp. 21–2, Macmillan and Co. Ltd, London, 1934. O'Connor later acknowledged that he had recommended that the Panchen Lama should have been given protection but that the message had somehow been lost en route to Minto. O'Connor, *On the Frontier*, pp. 86–7.

10 L/P&S/17/10/7250, 901, Viceroy to India Office, 23/2/06.

11 Minto Papers, MSS12641, para 3, Memo, Jan. 1906, Report of Newsletter Received from. P.M.,' Nepal, 15/1/06.
12 White, *Sikkim and Bhutan: Twenty-One Years on the North-East Frontier*, pp. 48–9.
13 Mary, Countess of Minto, *India Under Minto and Morley*, pp. 21–2. During the extended takeover period, when Curzon delayed his departure, it is likely that the two men had arranged an opportunity to discuss the delicate matter of frontier policy, in which both were interested, before Curzon finally left India.
14 Sikkim–Tibet Convention, 1890. Under this treaty the Chinese recognised the British Protectorate over Sikkim, and Sikkim's boundary with Tibet was settled. A second trade convention followed in 1893 which arranged affairs between China and Britain. Neither treaty included Tibetan representatives.
15 CD5240, 92, Gvt. of India to Sec. of State, 31/2/05, Encl. 1, P.O. Sikkim to Sec. to Gvt. of India, For. Dept., 31/12/04. Chapter 1, note 19.
16 CD5240, 92, Gvt. of India to Sec. of State, 17/4/06, Encl. 2, Sec. to Gvt. of India, For. Dept., to P.O. Sikkim, 1/4/05; Encl. 3, P.O. Sikkim to Gvt. of India, For. Dept., 5/7/05; Encl. 4, Sec. to Gvt. of India, For. Dept., to P.O. Sikkim, 26/7/05; Encl. 5, Extract from T.A. Gyantse, Diary for Week Ending 3/9/05.
17 CD5240, 92, Gvt. of India to Sec. of State, 7/4/06, Encl. 7, Letter from P.O. Sikkim to Gvt. of India, For. Dept., 13/7/06.
18 CD5240, 97, Viceroy to Sec. of State, Tel., 27/6/06; 100, Sec. of State to Gvt. of India, Despatch, 13/7/06.
19 FO535/9, 7, Nicolson to Grey, 26/12/06; 8, Nicolson to Grey, 27/12/06. The two incidents referred to involved, firstly, the Russian discovery of a British fleet on cruise in the Baltic and, secondly, adverse Russian reaction to a speech made by Liberal prime minister Campbell-Bannerman in the House of Commons on 23 July 1906, which included implied criticism of the Tsar following the collapse of the Duma.
20 FO535/9, 7, Nicolson to Grey, 26/12/06.
21 John Morley, *Recollections*, Vol. 11, pp. 150–1, Macmillan & Co. Ltd, London, 1917.
22 FO535/9, 29, Nicolson to Grey, 6/1/07.
23 FO535/9, 104, Nicolson to Grey, 13/3/07.
24 FO535/9, 84, Nicolson to Grey, 23/3/07.
25 CD5240, 207, Jordan to Grey, 26/9/07, Encl. Draft Submitted to the Wai Wu Pu; 206, Jordan to Grey, 22/8/07; 207, Jordan to Grey, 28/9/07. When Jordan approached the Wai Wu Pu in August 1907 they were typically unhelpful, claiming to be 'much perplexed' by his request, which they argued was inappropriate since it was already well known that the emperor did not permit any unauthorised travel within his empire.
26 FO371/382, Grey's Minute on Nicolson to Grey, 28/3/07. Quoted in Alastair Lamb, *The McMahon Line: A Study in the Relations Between India, China and Tibet, 1904–14*, Vol. 1, p. 97, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1966.
27 Sven Hedin already enjoyed an international reputation as an explorer and therefore needed careful handling. He came into conflict with the India Office in 1906 while attempting to enter Tibet via India. With Minto's help he eventually reached Tibet via Sinkiang and, in gratitude, he dedicated his book *Trans-Himalaya: Discoveries and Adventures in Tibet* (3 vols, London, 1909–1913), to the viceroy.
28 For a detailed account of the circumstances surrounding the creation of Sikang, see S.A.M. Adshead, *Province and Politics in Late Imperial China: Viceregal Government in Szechuan, 1898–1911*, Scandinavian Institute of Asian Studies, Monograph Series No. 50, Curzon Press, London, 1984.
29 Peter Fleming, *Bayonets to Lhasa*, Rupert Hart-Davis, London, 1962, p. 60.
30 FO535/9, 29, Nicolson to Grey, 6/1/07; 68, Note For Communication to the

Russian Government by Sir Arthur Nicolson, Feb. 1907; 54, Nicolson to Grey, 14/10/07. CD5240, 209, Jordan to Grey, 14/10/07.

31 Jordan Papers, 350/5, 46, Jordan to Campbell, 11/7/07.
32 FO535/9, 28, Nicolson to Grey, 5/1/07; 11, Nicolson to Grey, 5/1/07.
33 FO535/9, 28, Nicolson to Grey, 5/1/07.
34 FO535/9, 11, Nicolson to Grey, 5/1/07; 29, Nicolson to Grey, 6/1/07.
35 FO371/382, F.O. Minutes on Nicolson to Grey, 6/1/07 and Hardinge Minute, 6/2/07. Quoted in Lamb, *The McMahon Line*, Vol. 1, p. 104.
36 FO371/382, 10, India Office to Foreign Office, 5/2/07. Quoted in Lamb, *The McMahon Line*, Vol. 1, p. 104.
37 FO535/9, 43, Nicolson to Grey, Report Marked 'Most Confidential', 19/1/07. Hardinge Papers, 190711, Hardinge to Nicolson, 19/3/07.
38 FO535/9, 64, Nicolson to Grey, 12/2/07.
39 FO535/9, 28, Nicolson to Grey, 5/1/07.
40 Jordan Papers, 350/10, Jordan to Campbell, 11/7/07.
41 Morley, *Recollections*, Vol. 11, pp. 177–8, 244–5. John Buchan, *Minto: A Memoir*, pp. 225–7, London, 1924. Grey of Falloden, *Twenty-Five Years: 1892–1916*, p. 253, Hodder & Stoughton Ltd, London, 1925.
42 Lamb, *The McMahon Line*, Vol. 1, pp. 113–14.
43 Minto Papers, MSS12640, Satow Report, Satow to Viceroy, 27/9/04.
44 Ibid. Minto Papers, MSS12594, Morley to Satow, 29/9/04.
45 FO535/4, 106, Foreign Office to India Office, 10/10/04. See also the discussion in Walt van Praag, *The Status of Tibet: History, Rights and Prospects in International Law*, Wisdom Publications, London, 1987, pp. 36–7.
46 FO55/4, 119, Incl. Gvt. of India to India Office, 29/4/04.
47 FO535/4, 97, Satow to Foreign Office, 20/9/05.
48 Minto Papers, MSS1294, Tibet, p. 45.
49 *Suzerainty*: The right to exercise limited control over the governments of semi-independent or autonomous states. *Sovereignty*: Absolute control over the state.

In 1793 the Manchu had claimed suzerain rights over Tibet, but the Tibetans had always disputed this and the declining power of the Manchu *ambans* during the nineteenth century and the early twentieth had made the Chinese unable to enforce their claim. The term 'suzerain' was not included in the Lhasa Convention of 1904, and the terms 'suzerain' and 'sovereign' were also excluded from the adhesion treaty of 1906 at the express wish of the Chinese. The issue remained unresolved and was an important reason for the collapse of the Simla negotiations of 1913/14 which will be discussed in Chapter 6. After the fall of the Manchu in 1911 the Tibetans considered themselves to be freed from all ties to China.

50 Further Papers Relating to Tibet, 1905, CD2370, 31, Satow to Lansdowne, 19/9/05. Tang Shao-yi claimed to have tripped and injured his foot during a game of croquet. It was widely rumoured at the time, however, that he had in fact been ordered back to Peking, despite his insistence that he himself had requested the recall.
51 Minto Papers, MSS12640, Summary, For. Dept.; 'Confidential', Chinese Adhesion Agreement, p. 4.
52 Ibid. Further Papers Relating to Tibet, 1904–1906, CD3088, Convention/Adhesion Agreements.
53 Younghusband, *India and Tibet*, pp. 257–8, 282–7, 285–90.
54 Minto Papers, MSS12640, Tibetan Indemnity, Trade Reports, Chumbi, Dec. 1905. Further Papers Relating to Tibet, CD2370, 50, Despatch, Satow to Lansdowne, 13/11/05. Younghusband, *India and Tibet*, pp. 348–50.
55 CD2370, 54, Undersec. of State For. Office to Undersec. of State India Office, 3/12/05.

56 Further Papers Relating to Tibet, 1906–1910, CD5240, 62, Undersec. of State India Office to Undersec of State For. Office, 24/1/06.

57 FO535/9, 26, O'Connor to Gvt. of India, 27/4/06. In his Report O'Connor describes 'the furtherance and development of our commercial relations with Tibet' as the second objective of the negotiations leading to the signing of the Lhasa Convention of 1904.

58 The *jongpons* at Phari were aggressive in defending the trading benefits that accompanied the British occupation of the Chumbi valley, but the greatest opposition to British trade in the valley came from Bhutanese traders who had most to lose from any continuing British presence. The whole of the Chumbi valley had been formerly part of Sikkim but had been transferred to Tibet in 1792 as part of the arrangements for the Tibeto-Nepalese treaty of that year, hence the general confusion about grazing rights, given out as one of the main reasons for the Younghusband expedition in 1903.

59 For a more detailed examination of the life and work of James Hart, see S.F. Wright, *Hart and the Chinese Customs Service*, W.M. Mullan & Son Ltd, Belfast, 1950.

60 Further Papers Relating to Tibet, 1904, CD1920, Reports From Claude White, encls. in letter to Sec. to Gvt. of India For. Dept, 25/6/1895 and note 14 above.

61 Trade Reports, CD2247, Mr A. Hosie, His Majesty's Consul-General at Chengtu, 'On a Journey to the Eastern Frontier of Tibet, 1905'. This comprehensive report on the tea and mineral wealth, including gold, refers to the 'great highway connecting Chengtu, the capital of Szechuan, with Lhasa'.

62 Sir Alexander Hosie, *Three Years in Western China: A Narrative of Three Journeys in Seuchuan, Kueichow and Yunnan*, George Phillip & Son, London, 1897. Major H.R. Davies, *Yunnan: The Link Between India and the Yangtse*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1909.

63 Lieutenant-Colonel L.A. Waddell, *Lhasa and its Mysteries*, Appendix IX, 'Report on Gold Mines in Tibet'. See Chapter 1, note 13. Although it appears that Waddell was not much in tune with his fellow officers he was a Tibetologist and traveller in his own right, and one of his main occupations, besides looking after the sick and injured, was to collect material for the British Museum.

64 FO535/9, 26, O'Connor to Gvt. of India, 26/4/06. Here O'Connor refers to a 'line of communication being established across South East Tibet from Assam'.

65 For example, FO535/9, 27, Encl. 4, Quarterly Report, Chumbi Valley, 30/6/06.

66 FO535/9, 27, O'Connor to Gvt. of India, 26/4/06. Hutchinson eventually produced a report in pamphlet form entitled, *Indian Brick Tea For Tibet*, published by the Cess Tea Company Ltd in 1906. FO535/9, 27, Encl. 4, Quarterly Review by W.L. Campbell, 30/6/06; Encl. 5, Quarterly Report by F.M. Bailey. These reports describe the vain attempts by British trade agents to disguise and distribute the Indian tea samples by dyeing them red and selling them at the cheapest prices.

67 Tsarong Shape later became one of the Dalai Lama's closest friends and his adviser. Louis Dane left the talks in 1908 to take up his new post as governor of the Punjab. Eric Wilton, formerly Chinese adviser to the Younghusband expedition and afterwards consul-general at Tengyueh in 1906, was later promoted to Chinese secretary in London between 1912 and 1915. In 1917 he was made first secretary to the British legation in Peking.

68 CD5240, 118, Minto to Morley, 22/12/06; 120, Gvt. of India to India Office, 24/12/06; 218, Minto to Morley, 15/1/08. Morley, *Recollections*, Vol. 11, pp. 177–8.

69 Parshotam Mehra, *The North-Eastern Frontier: A Documentary Study of Internecine*

Rivalry Between India, Tibet and China, 1906–14, Vol. 1, 'Introduction', Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1979.

70 CD5240, 118, Minto to Morley, 22/12/06; 124, Grey to Jordan, 28/12/06; 127, Morley to Minto, 27/12/06; 148, Jordan to Grey, Despatch, 23/12/07.

71 CD5240, 210, Jordan to Grey, 24/12/07; 218, Minto to Morley, Tel., 15/1/08.

72 CD5240, 220, Grey to Jordan, 21/1/08; 235, Encl. in Letter to Sec. of State For. Dept; 25/2/08; 226, Morley to Minto, 10/1/08; 226, Minto to Morley, 12/12/08.

73 CD5240, 192, Gvt. of India to Sec. of State, 31/2/05, Encl. 1, P.O. Sikkim to Sec. to Gvt. of India, For. Dept., 31/12/04.

3 Beyond the frontier: the British administration in Tibet, 1904–1908

1 Gartok was the ancient administrative capital for western Tibet. It was extremely cold in winter and most people left the area after the annual fair in mid-November. From 1904 a British Agent named Thakin Jai Chand was posted there to monitor Indian trading interests. The nephew of the ruler of neighbouring Lahaul, he was believed to be in a better position to foster vital links with the peoples of the borderlands, as well as with the Tibetan *garphons* who effectively controlled Tibetan trade in the area.

2 Arthur Swinson, *Beyond the Frontiers: The Biography of Col. F.M. Bailey, Explorer and Secret Agent*, pp. 1 and 5, London, 1971. Frederick 'Hatter' Bailey (1882–1967) joined the Politicals in 1905. After serving as a member of Younghusband's invasion force 1903/4 he became a trade agent at Gyantse. He later went on to enjoy an exciting career as an explorer and spy in other parts of Central Asia.

3 Charles Bell (1870–1945). Wrote extensively about Tibet. After joining the ICS in 1889 he was transferred to Darjeeling on health grounds in 1900. He was a member of the Younghusband invasion force (1903/4) and then served as assistant political officer in Chumbi (1904/5) before becoming, firstly, assistant political officer in Sikkim (1906/8) and finally political officer for Sikkim (1908/20). After his association with the Dalai Lama in 1912 he replaced Younghusband as foremost authority on Tibet.

4 Francis Younghusband, *India and Tibet*, p. 318, John Murray, London, 1910.

5 Minto Papers, MSS12640, Summary Foreign Dept., Confidential, November 1905–March 1906, 'Opening of Dispensaries at Gyantse and Chumbi'; MSS12636, Summary 1905, 'Revision of Medical Arrangements in Chumbi on its Evacuation'.

6 Claude White, *Sikkim and Bhutan: Twenty-One Years on the North-East Frontier, 1887–1908*, pp. 3–6, Edward Arnold, London, 1909. White took a pay cut to transfer to the Politicals from the Public Works Dept. See also Chapter 2, note 5.

7 Members of the Native ICS worked under a quite different pay and career structure. For more about the work of the Indian pundits, see Peter Hopkirk, *Trespassers on the Roof of the World: The Race for Lhasa*, p. 54, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1982, and Karl Meyer and Shareen Brysac, Tournament of Shadows: *The Great Game and the Race for Empire in Asia*, pp. 210–22, Little, Brown and Company, 2001.

8 Minto Papers, 12640, 'Mission of Mr. Chang, Chinese High Commissioner for Trade Marts, 1906', p. 21; CD5240, 95, Minto to Morley, 22/6/06; 96, Sec. of State to Viceroy, 26/6/06.

9 CD5240, 95, Viceroy to Sec. of State, Tel., 22/6/06.

10 Ibid.

11 CD5240, 96, Sec. of State to Viceroy, Tel., 26/6/06

12 CD5240, 101, Encls. in Letter to Sec. to Gvt. of India For. Dept., 28/6/06, Encl.

'Memo of Conversation Between Dane and Chang'. Minto Papers, MSS 12640, 21, pp. 12–14, 'Interviews, Chang and the Foreign Secretary', 25/6/06.

13 Ibid.

14 CD5240, 96, Sec. of State to Viceroy, Tel., 22/6/06; 101, Encl., 'Memo of Conversation Between Dane and Chang', 28/6/06. Chang's assumption that the Chinese adhesion treaty had sorted out frontier problems and returned Tibet to China later became the official view of the Wai Wu Pu. Henderson of the Chinese Customs Service, on special attachment to Chang's mission, was able to confirm to the government of India that Chang was awaiting staff at Simla who would then take him on to Lhasa. Morley and Minto both suspected from the start that the Gartok trip was a red herring.

15 Jordan Papers, 350/4, Private Letter, Jordan to Campbell, 21/12/07; Jordan to Campbell, 2/5/07; Jordan to Campbell, 19/8/08; Jordan to Campbell, 19/3/08. In 1908 and 1909 Tang Shao-yi was vice-president of the Wai Wu Pu.

16 CD5240, 103, Minto to Morley, Tel., 2/10/06. Major William Lachlan Campbell (1880–1937). For further details about Campbell's career, see Alex McKay, *Tibet and the British Raj: The Frontier Cadre, 1904–47*, pp. 63–4, 92, 98, 130, 146, London Studies on South Asia, Curzon Press, London, 1997.

17 CD5240, 105, Encls. in Letter to Sec. to Gvt. of India, For. Dept., Encl. 2, Campbell's Report on the Arrival of Mr Chang in Chumbi Valley, 18/10/06; Encl. 1, Bell's Report in Letter dated Pipitang, 30/9/06, From Chang Yin-tang to Gvt. of India.

18 CD5240, 105, Encl. 2, Campbell's Report on the Arrival of Mr Chang in Chumbi Valley, 18/10/06. In fairness to Campbell there were few properties available to the British to hire out to important visitors to Tibet and *dak* bungalows supplied basic comforts. Since they were his only option, apart from his own quarters, Campbell had clearly meant no insult.

19 Annie Taylor was already quite a celebrity, having spent many years in and around Tibet in an attempt to reach Lhasa. At this time she was renting a house in Yatung from the Chinese Customs Service that was in such a poor state that no one else would live there. Her life and her brave attempts to reach Lhasa are described in her book, *Pioneering in Tibet*, London, 1895.

20 CD5240, 105, Campbell's Report on the Arrival of Mr Chang in Chumbi Valley, 8/10/06. Campbell feared that Chang might have used his presence in Yatung to commandeer the mart for China and thereby issue a challenge to British authority there.

21 Ibid. This official line taken by Grey and Morley is also supported by Alastair Lamb in *The McMahon Line, 1904–14: A Study in the Relations Between India, China and Tibet*, Vol. 1, p. 129, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1966.

22 Henderson was willing to supply information to the government of India when it suited him. See note 14 above.

23 CD5240, 131, Letter to Sec. to Gvt. of India, For. Dept., 27/12/06, Encl. 1, Memo by Bell, 9/10/06; Encl. 2, Report on Letter dated Pipitang 30/9/06 from Chang to Gvt. of India; 105, Encl. 1, Memo, 'Bell's Report Containing Campbell's Report and Comments'. See note 44 below.

24 CD5240, 117, Undersec. of State India Office to Undersec. of State For. Dept., 131, Encls in Letter to Gvt. of India, For. Dept., 27/12/06; Encl. 5, Letter from Sec. To Gvt. of India, For. Dept., to P.O. Sikkim, 27/12/06; Jordan Papers, 350/4, Jordan to Grey, 5/1/07.

25 Frederick O'Connor, *On The Frontier and Beyond: A Record of Thirty Years' Service*, p. 109, John Murray, London, 1931; Swinson, *Beyond the Frontiers*, p. 51.

26 CD5240, 135, Encl. in Letter from P.O. Sikkim to Sec. to Gvt. of India, For. Dept., 13/12/06; Encl. 3, Officiating Br. T.A. to Sec. to Gvt. of India, For. Dept.; Encl. 4, Bailey to Sec. to Gvt. of India, For. Dept., 5/12/06; Encl. 6, P.O.

Sikkim, 24/11/06; Annexure 2, Gow to Bailey, 21/11/06 (Extract); Annexure, Bailey to Gow, 22/11/06; Encl. 10, Annexure 10, Letter from Gow to P.O. Sikkim, 4/12/06. Swinson, *Beyond the Frontiers*, pp. 51–2. O'Connor, *On The Frontier*, pp. 110–13.

27 O'Connor, *On the Frontier*, pp. 107–13.

28 CD5240, March 1907, 'O'Connor's Report to India'.

29 Jordan Papers, 350/4, Jordan to Campbell, 21/2/07. See note 44 below. Much of the information about what was going on in Gyantse had been supplied by Henderson, whose attitude towards British trade agents working inside Tibet was not always as sympathetic as might have been expected. For more about the Chinese Customs Service, see S.F. Wright, *Hart and the Chinese Customs Service*, W.M. Mullan & Son, Belfast, 1950, and Charles Drage, *Servants of the Dragon Throne: Being the Lives of Edward and Cecil Bowra*, Peter Dawnay Ltd, London, 1966.

30 Jordan Papers, 350/4, Jordan to Campbell, 11/7/07; CD5240, 135, Encl. in Letter from P.O. Sikkim to Sec. to Gvt. of India, For. Dept., Tel., 22/12/06.

31 For O'Connor this marked the end of an era. He felt that 'new personalities' had come upon the scene who regarded the whole Tibetan policy as a mistake and a nuisance. O'Connor, *On the Frontier*, pp. 116–17. Hardinge Papers, Vol. 70, Valentine Chirol to Hardinge, 14/6/12.

32 By 1910 Chinese forward policy had become so obvious that Minto began to demand military backup for the trade marts. See, for example, FO535/12, 155, Morley to Minto, 8/9/10; Encl. 1, Morley to Minto, 1/9/10; Encl. 2, Minto to Morley, 8/9/10.

33 White's own account of this trip is given in his book, *Sikkim and Bhutan*.

34 CD5240, 105, Bell's Report to Sec. to Gvt. of India, For. Dept., 18/10/06.

35 CD5240, 133, Bell to Gvt. of India, 28/11/06; 135, Encls. in Letter P.O. Sikkim to Sec. to Gvt of India, For. Dept., 13/12/06; Encl. 8, Extract of Notes on Conversations Between Bell and Chang, 12/11/06.

36 Ibid. This was a grave oversight because, under the terms of the Lhasa Convention, the Tibetans had to be consulted.

37 CD5240, 146, Encl. 2, Gvt. of India to Bell, 21/11/07.

38 See note 32 above.

39 The Lhasa authorities had now fallen under the influence of the Chinese *amban* to a much greater extent than ever before Younghusband had arrived in their city. Bell's reports at this time contain many references to rumours that the Tibetans believed a Chinese invasion of Lhasa to be imminent.

40 L/P&S/10/7250, Viceroy to Sec. of State, 11/9/06; Viceroy to Sec. of State, 15/11/06; Sec. of State to Viceroy, 28/11/06. See Chapter 2, note 6.

41 Lamb, *The McMahon Line*, Vol. 1, pp. 135–6, quoting PEF 1908/22, No. 264, Minto to Morley (Private), 2/2/07.

42 Ibid. Quoting PEF 1908/22, India to Bell, 10/10/06; Bell to India, 17/11/06.

43 Charles Bell, *Portrait of the Dalai Lama*, pp. 98–104, Collins, London, 1946.

44 CD5240, 60, Encl. in Letter to Sec. to Gvt. of India, For. Dept., 28/12/05; Encl. 1, Letter From Assistant P.O. Sikkim, 17/11/05. Minto Paper, MSS12640, 10, 'The Phari Jongpens Interference in Local Administration', 1906. CD5240, Encl. in Letter from Sec. of State to Gvt. of India, For. Dept., 28/10/08; Encl. 1, P.O. Sikkim to Sec. to Gvt. of India, For. Dept., 28/11/08; Annexure 1, Letter P.O. Sikkim to W.L. Campbell, T.A. Gyantse, 16/6/08; Annexure 2, Letter to Br. T.A. Yatung to P.O. Sikkim. See note 16 above.

45 For example, Minto Papers, MSS12641, para 5, September 1905.

46 CD5240, 101, Encls. in Letter to Sec. of State to Gvt. of India, For. Dept.; Encl. 'Memo of Conversation Between Dane and Chang'. Minto Papers, MSS12640, 21, pp. 12–14, 'Interviews, Chang and the Foreign Secretary', 25/6/06.

47 Younghusband Diaries, Extracts, Col. F.E. Younghusband to Ho, 19/8/03; 22/8/03, in *The British Invasion of Tibet/Col. Younghusband/1904*, London Stationery Office, 1999.
48 For example, FO535/9, 26, O'Connor to Gvt. of India, 27/4/06.
49 CD5240, 131, Encl. in Letter to Gvt. of India, For. Dept.; Encl. 4, Letter P.O. Sikkim to Sec. to Gvt. of India, For. Dept., 27/12/06. A good general account of these trade disputes from the perspective of the Indian government may be found in C.A. Sherring, *Western Tibet and the British Borderlands*, Edward Arnold, 1906, and Charles Bell, *The People of Tibet*, pp. 5–84 and 120, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1928.
50 CD5240, 135, Encls. in Letter from P.O. Sikkim to Sec. to Gvt. of India, For. Dept.; Encl. 9, P.O. Sikkim to Sec. to Gvt. of India, For. Dept., 8/12/06.
51 Shadi La was an Indian trader who found himself unable to operate inside the Tibetan border due to opposition from the powerful *garphons* of Gartok who, like the *jongpons* of Phari, enjoyed monopoly rights to the mart. The *garphons* received training in Lhasa and lived in Gartok for the summer months, and it was often the custom for them to appoint deputies to act in their place, making it even more difficult to establish any meaningful dialogue with them.
52 These garrisons had been operating for many years under an eighteenth-century Sino-Tibetan agreement. See Walt van Praag, *The Status of Tibet: History, Rights and Prospects in International Law*, pp. 14–22, Wisdom Publications, London, 1987. See also Chapter 1, note 18.

4 Delicate work: the Dalai Lama, the China Service and East Tibet, 1904–1909

1 For example, FO535/9, 26, O'Connor to GOI, 24/6/06; Alexander Hosie, *Three Years in Western China: A Narrative of Three Journeys in Sechuan, Kueichou and Yunnan*, George Phillip & Son, London, 1897; H.R. Davies, *Yunnan: The Link Between India and the Yangtse*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1909.
2 Francis Alexander Campbell (1852–1911). Senior clerk at the Far Eastern Department from 1902 until his untimely death in December 1911.
3 Grey was particularly interested in promoting the Anglo-Japanese alliance which had been signed in 1902 and which became particularly useful during the First World War when the Japanese fleet was needed to protect British interests in Asia. He also believed in expanding Britain's commercial interests in China and invariably gave the East Asian Department his full support.
4 Jordan Papers, 350/7, Langley to Jordan, 29/12/11. Walter Langley (1855–1918). Campbell's deputy and later his replacement after 1911. Langley was already well known to Jordan as a regular correspondent. Letters from London bringing news and gossip from home were a lifeline to the Peking legation, and over the years Campbell had become a personal friend. Jordan felt his loss keenly.
5 Valentine Chirol compared the British compound with an English country garden, the air thick with the scent of roses. (Valentine Chirol, *Fifty Years in a Changing World*, pp. 86–7, Jonathan Cape, London, 1927). Permanent residents were less enthralled, however, and *The Times* newspaper correspondent George Morrison found the compound so claustrophobic that he took a house outside the grounds.
6 The position of Chinese secretary was a powerful one since much of the work of the legation was conducted in Chinese. In 1909 the Chinese secretary had become so envied by his colleagues that an internal inquiry was ordered into the behaviour of the then current incumbent Eric Wilton. The inquiry found that the allegations were justified and recommended that future occupants of

the post should be prevented from taking over too much of the legation work in the interests of morale. P.D. Coates, *China Consuls*, p. 447, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1988.

7 Diplomatic practice changed quite dramatically after the collapse of the Manchu dynasty in 1911 when the Wai Wu Pu was reconstituted as the Wai Chaio Pu. Before this time it was quite usual for British ministers to be summoned to the Wai Wu Pu in the early hours of the morning. After 1911 it was not uncommon to conduct interviews in English, as some of the new Chinese diplomats had been educated in the west.

8 The British legation in Peking was not an embassy and the British minister not an ambassador. Despite pressure to upgrade the legation permission was not granted, probably because its primary function was simply to organise the conduct of Britain's trade and commerce inside China. Sir Claude Macdonald held the post in 1900. He was an ex-military man who distinguished himself during the Boxer crisis of that year.

9 Ernest Satow, later Sir (1843–1929). The fourth son of a London-based Swedish merchant and his English wife, Satow received his BA from University College London before joining the China Service as a student Interpreter in 1861. By 1868 he had been promoted to Japanese secretary in Tokyo where his friendship with Ito helped to advance Anglo-Japanese relations after the Meiji Restoration. Between 1901 and 1906 he was British minister to Peking and helped to negotiate the Boxer Protocol in 1901. A great scholar and linguist in his own right, he was the author of numerous books on Japanese life and culture. His long-term relationship with a Japanese woman gave him two sons but may have cost him further promotion. After he left China in 1906 he continued to act as an informal adviser to the Foreign Office and was British arbitrator in the Hague until his death in 1929. One of a handful of people promoted directly from the Consular Service to the China Service, he was the only one to have been an interpreter in Japan and China. He never returned to the East after his retirement but later gave general support to the Chinese Republic in 1911.

10 John Newell Jordan, later Sir (1852–1925). Son of a Presbyterian farming family from County Down, Jordan was educated at the Royal Academical Institution and Queens College Belfast where he became an outstanding classical scholar. Between 1876 and 1879 he held various positions in the China Consular Service and by 1891 had been promoted to Chinese secretary at the Peking legation. Between 1896 and 1906 he was consul-general at Seoul and during this time was witness to a Japanese takeover of the country in 1902 which left him with a profound distrust of Japanese diplomacy. Like Satow he was promoted from the Consular Service to become British minister in Peking in 1906 and remained there until 1920, becoming doyen of the legations in 1911. His friendship with President Yuan Shih Kai, whom he probably first met in Korea, was of enormous benefit to the British, and Yuan's death in 1916 affected him deeply. His wife Anne, whom he married in 1885, spent many years with him in Korea and Peking and became an important stabilising influence at the legation. Between 1920 and 1921 Jordan was adviser to the discussions surrounding the arrangements for the Washington Conference of 1922. He died in London in 1925 leaving a wife and three sons, his only daughter having tragically died from a viral infection in 1918.

11 Coates, *China Consuls*, p. 445.

12 Ibid., p. 436. Many of the recruits identified by Coates came from missionary families and were believed to be better adapted to conditions in the interior of China and in the remoter posts on the fringes of the Chinese Empire.

13 The consular posts at Tengyueh and Yunnanfu were both established in 1894.

Situated in a remote part of Yunnan, Tengyueh experienced incessant monsoon rains between May and October each year which made it virtually impossible to operate effectively as a consular post during these months. It was manned by members of the China Consular Service; the Indian government met half its running costs. Although in a more convenient position at the old provincial capital of Yunnan, the British post at Yunnanfu tended to concentrate on monitoring tribal activity in upper Burma on behalf of the Indian government.

14 Hosie, *Three Years in Western China*, pp. 45–56; Coates, *China Consuls*, pp. 306, 314–16, 394–7.

15 Trade Reports, CD2247, A Report by Mr Hosie, His Majesty's Consul-General at Chengtu, 'On a Journey to the Eastern Frontier of Tibet, 1905'.

16 Minto Papers, MSS12640, pp. 65–77. Disturbances in Batang from Report by C.G. Chengtu, Copied to Gvt. of India, Dec. 1905. Report by C.G. Yunnanfu, Copied to Gvt. of India, Oct. 1905.

17 FO535/9, 165, Fox to Jordan, 23/2/07; Encl. 3, 'Memorandum by the Rev. J.H. Edgar Respecting the Proposed Colonisation of Eastern Tibet'. J.H. Edgar was working for the China inland mission based in Batang. His knowledge of the area and his command of both written and spoken Chinese and Tibetan made him an invaluable source of information to the Peking legation.

18 CD5240, 167, Jordan to Grey, 19/2/07, Containing Copy of Despatch from Goffe, Chengtu; 182, Goffe to Jordan, 23/2/07, Containing Goffe's Trans. of Chao's Proclamation Inviting Sechuan 'Farming Class' to Batang; 205, Jordan to Grey, Containing Chao's Proclamation in Full. FO535/9, 165, Fox to Jordan, 23/2/07. Suchita Ghosh, *Tibet in Sino-Indian Relations, 1899–1914*, p. 97, Sterling Publishers Ltd, New Delhi, 1977.

19 Jordan Papers, 350/5, Jordan to Campbell, 28/5/08; Jordan to Campbell, 17/9/08. Morrison Papers, MSS312/259, 'Tibet', 261, Gordier, 30/5/05; 249, 12/6/07.

20 A. Lamb, *The McMahon Line, 1904–14: A Study in the Relations Between India, China and Tibet*, Vol. 1, p. 176, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1966.

21 CD5240, 229, 'Note Re. Siege of Hsiang Cheng' (communicated through C.G. Chengtu), 22/2/08.

22 Morrison Papers, MSS312/259, item 331, Eugene Chen, Tachienlu Correspondent to the *North China Herald*, 'Chinese in Eastern Tibet: The Late Chao Erh Feng's Work', 1/11/13.

23 Minto Papers, MSS12640, 36, Nyarong Province in Tibet, Report from Bailey, February 1907. Eric Teichman, *Travels of a Consular Officer in Eastern Tibet*, pp. 2–4, 23–4, Cambridge, 1922.

24 Jordan Papers, 350/5, Jordan to Campbell, 28/5/08.

25 FO535/12, 21, Jordan to Grey, 20/3/09; Encl. Report of Mr Ridley to Consul General Fraser from Nsi-ing (Sining), Kansu, 22/12/08. W. Palace, 'The Kozlov Expedition and the Problem of Kokonor, 1907–10', *Asian Affairs*, February 2001.

26 Morrison Papers, 175/91, Report, Transcript Unsigned, *c.* 1912, Addressed to Jordan in Peking. This document was probably translated by Morrison's staff. Morrison left *The Times* newspaper in 1912 in order to join Yuan Shih Kai as his foreign adviser.

27 Ibid.

28 Ibid. L/P&S/10, 149, Foreign Office to India Office, 30/1/08.

29 Jordan Papers, 350/5, 56, Jordan to Campbell, 29/10/08.

30 CD5240, 249, Jordan to Grey, 21/7/08; 222, Jordan to Grey, 29/1/08. Jordan Papers, 56, Jordan to Campbell, 29/1/08.

31 CD5240, 115, Jordan to Grey, 31/10/06; 119, Minto to Morley, 22/12/06.

32 CD5240, 243, Jordan to Grey, 21/7/08.

33 Ibid.
34 Jordan Papers, 350/15, Jordan to Grey, 12/10/09. Morrison Papers, MSS 312/1258, 121, Memo on the Dalai Lama, *c.* 1908; 241, The Visit of the Dalai Lama to Peking. The Great Fifth's visit to Peking in 1653 was seen as an important public relations exercise by the Manchu court who had only recently ousted the Ming dynasty. The Manchu treated the Tibetan Dalai Lama as the ruler of an independent state and built the Yellow Temple outside the city walls in his honour and to spare him the indignity of having to descend from his carriage to walk through the city gates.
35 Chinese accounts of the visit lay special emphasis upon the details of protocol, whereas Tibetan accounts stress its religious significance in terms of the *cho-yon*. Walt van Praag, *The Status of Tibet: History, Rights and Prospects in International Law*, pp. 10–13, Wisdom Publications, London, 1987.
36 Morrison Papers, MSS312/258, 121, Notes on the Dalai Lama, *c.* 1908. CD5240, 260, Jordan to Grey, Peking, 12/10/08.
37 CD5240, 264, Jordan to Grey, Peking, 11/11/08. Morrison Papers, MSS312/258, 231, Reports on the Dalai Lama, *c.* 1908. W. Palace, 'The Dalai Lama in Peking, September to December, 1908', *Asian Affairs*, June 1988.
38 Jordan Papers, 350/5, Jordan to Alston, 25/11/08. CD5240, 262, Encl. Jordan to Grey, 25/10/08. Morrison Papers, MSS312/258, 121, Notes on the Dalai Lama, *c.* 1908.
39 Jordan Papers, 350/5, 59, Jordan to Alston, 25/11/08. FO535/11, 7, Jordan to Grey, 23/1/09 with Encl. 1, 'Memorandum Respecting an Interview Between the Dalai Lama and Maharj Kumar, Sikkim, Held at the Yellow Temple, Peking on November 25th, 1908', 'Note on the Memo. by Maj. O'Connor'; Encl. 2 'Memorandum Respecting the Visit of Maharaj Kumar of Sikkim to Peking'. Both marked 'confidential'. Morrison Papers, item 235, 'Notes on the Dalai Lama', 30/11/08.

The Maharaj Kumar of Sikkim was visiting the Dalai Lama in his capacity as vice-president of the Buddhist Shrines Restoration Society of which the Dalai Lama was also president. O'Connor had been employed by the Indian government to act as escort to the Maharaj on his world tour and his presence at the meeting was naturally of particular interest to Jordan.
40 Under the terms of the Anglo-Russian Convention Russia had agreed not to interfere in Tibetan affairs. When the Dalai Lama sent Dorjiev, who had apparently been with him in Peking, to the Tsar's court requesting an escort of twenty-four men to guide him safely home to Lhasa, this request was refused. S.A.M. Adshead argues that the Chinese believed that the Dalai Lama had deliberately delayed his return to await the Russian decision. S.A.M. Adshead, *Province and Politics in Late Imperial China: Viceregal Government in Szechuan, 1898–1911*, p. 87, Scandinavian Institute of Asian Studies, Monograph Series No. 50, Curzon Press, London, 1984.
41 Between 1907 and 1908 Chao Erh Feng was acting viceroy in Sichuan and as such became responsible for the Sikang campaign. In 1908 he was appointed imperial commissioner for Tibet, a post equivalent in status to that of *amban*, and the following year ordered the invasion of Lhasa. In 1911 he was appointed viceroy of Sichuan, but was murdered by a mob in Chengdu in 1912.
42 Tawang monastery was sister to the Drepung monastery and there were strong links between them.
43 CD5240, 297, Encls. in Letter from Sec. to Gvt. of India, For. Dept., 13/1/07; Encl. 2, P.O. Sikkim to Sec. to Gvt. of India, For. Dept., 21/12/09; Annexure 2, Tel. from Dalai Lama and Council of Tibet to Britain and all the Ministers of Europe, Trans.; Annexure 3, 'The Following to be Sent After Some Days if No Reply to Above'.

Lien Yu was *amban* in Lhasa between 1907 and 1911. In 1907 he had founded a Chinese school in the city after acquiring a printing press from India which he used to print attacks on the Indian government and copies of Classics translated from the original Chinese. In 1908 he had set up a military college which employed Chinese and Japanese instructors to train young Tibetans for the modern Chinese army. His future proposals for a Board of Mines and his plans to transform Tibetan agriculture by inviting Chinese farmers to Tibet, together with the opening of Chinese schools in some Tibetan provinces, proved too much for the Dalai Lama who demanded his recall. He was finally deposed in 1911 by Chung Ying, leader of the Chinese forces when they invaded Lhasa in February 1910.

44 CD5240, 284, Encl. in a Letter to Sec to Gvt. of India, For. Dept. From P.O. Sikkim, 24/2/09; Encl. Extracts from Newspaper Articles Trans. from Tibetan; 288, Jordan to Grey, 22/6/09, Encl. Note, Jordan to Prince Chi'ng, 17/6/9.

45 CD5240, 297, Encl. in Letter from Sec. of State to Gvt. of India, For. Dept., 13/1/07; Encl. 2, Annexure 4, Tel. From Dalai Lama and Council of Tibet to Britain and Ministers of Europe, trans. Charles Bell, *Portrait of the Dalai Lama*, p. 81, Collins, London, 1946.

46 CD5240, 300, Grey to Jordan, Tel., 11/2/10; 314, Letter, India Office to Foreign Office, 22/2/10; 303, Max-Muller to Grey, Tel., 15/2/10.

47 CD5240, 304, Viceroy to Sec. of State, 18/12/10; 305, Viceroy to Sec. of State, 19/2/10; 306, Viceroy to Sec. of State, 19/2/10; 308, Viceroy to Sec. of State, 20/2/10; 311, Viceroy to Sec. of State, 22/2/10. Francis Younghusband, *India and Tibet*, pp. 319–20, John Murray, London, 1910.

48 CD5240, 304, Viceroy to Sec. of State, 18/2/10. Bell, *Portrait of the Dalai Lama*, p. 82. Simon Normanton records an eyewitness account of the Dalai Lama's arrival at the telegraph post on the Sikkim border. On being woken up in the middle of the night by a knock on the door of the hut he shared with Sergeant Luff, Sergeant Humphries of the Indian Telegraph Service apparently enquired of the seven bedraggled figures before him: 'Which of you blighters is the Dalai Lama?' Simon Normanton, *Tibet: The Lost Civilisation*, p. 59, Hamish Hamilton, London, 1988.

49 CD5240, 306, Viceroy to Sec. of State, 19/12/10.

50 CD5240, 297, Encl. in Letter For. Sec. to Gvt. of India, For. Dept., 13/1/10; Encl. 2, P.O. Sikkim to Sec. to Gvt. of India, For. Dept., 21/2/09; Extract, Annexure 1, Letter, Cpt. Kennedy, Officiating T.A. Gyantse to P.O. Sikkim, 8/12/09.

51 CD5240, 311, Viceroy to Sec. of State, Tel., 22/2/10. With a Scottish father and Sikkimese mother David Macdonald had survived the potential stigma of mixed parentage to become British trade agent at Gyantse. He served in Tibet for twenty years and his marriage to a woman of mixed Nepalese and Scottish blood, together with his knowledge of many local dialects and languages, made him virtually indispensable to the British Raj. He wrote of his experiences in his book, *Twenty Years in Tibet*, London, 1932.

52 O'Connor had visited the Dalai Lama in Peking in 1908. See note 39 above.

53 Jordan Papers, 350/5, Jordan to Campbell, 6/5/09; Jordan to Campbell, 14/7/09. CD5240, 303, Max-Muller to Grey, 15/2/10. William Grenfell Max-Muller (1867–1945). Between 1909 and 1911 he was a councillor at the Peking legation and sometimes chargés d'affaires in Jordan's absence. In 1910 he led the inquiry into the behaviour of Chinese secretary Eric Wilton, and his entire career was divided between the Far Eastern Department in London and the Peking legation. He was finally passed over as British Minister in favour of Beilby Alston when Jordan retired in 1920.

54 CD5240, 314, Ritchie to Campbell, 22/2/10; 319, Grey to Max-Muller, 26/2/10.
55 CD5240, 315, Grey to Max-Muller, 23/2/10; 318, Max-Muller to Grey, Tel., 26/2/10. Dowager Empress Tzu Hsi died only hours after Emperor Kuang-hsu.
56 CD5240, 311, Viceroy to Sec. of State, Tel., 22/2/10; 323, Viceroy to Sec. of State, Tel., 27/2/10.
57 The new ruler of Bhutan, the Tsonga Penlop (Ugyen Wanchek), had previously acted as mediator during the British invasion of Tibet in 1903 and had thereafter been an enthusiastic supporter of British plans for a programme of reform in his own country. The Anglo-Bhutanese treaty of January 1910 was intended to bring Bhutan under British protection.
58 Bell, *Portrait of the Dalai Lama*, p. 79.
59 Ibid., p. 98. CD5240, 328, Viceroy to Sec. of State, Tel., 3/3/10; 347, Grey to Max-Muller, Tel., 8/4/10; 345, Letter, India Office to Foreign Office, 31/3/10.
60 Bell, *Portrait of the Dalai Lama*, pp. 98–104.
61 Ibid.
62 CD5240, 322, Translated Tel. from Wai Wu Pu, 25/2/10; 323, Viceroy to Sec. of State, 27/2/10. For the Chinese view of events, Morrison Papers, MSS312/259, 175, Report, Transcript Unsigned *c.* 1912, Addressed to Jordan in Peking.
63 CD5240, 293, Viceroy to Sec. of State, 31/1/10; FO535/13, 37, India Office to Foreign Office, 4/3/10.
64 CD5240, 348, Viceroy to Sec. of State, Tel., 11/4/10.
65 CD5240, 314, Ritchie to Campbell, 22/2/10; 316, Sec. of State to Viceroy, 23/1/10. Younghusband, *India and Tibet*, pp. 396–7.
66 CD5240, 337, Viceroy to Sec. of State, 17/3/10. Mary, Countess of Minto, *India Under Minto and Morley, 1905–10*, pp. 17–18, Macmillan & Co. Ltd, London, 1934.
67 Younghusband, *India and Tibet*, pp. 396–7.
68 FO535/11, 101, Encl. 1, Note By Major O'Connor Regarding Tibet, 13/3/08.
69 FO535/11, 101, Encl. 2, Wilton to Gvt. of India, Note Regarding India's North-East Frontier Relations.
70 FO535/11, 33, Encl. 2, H.F. French Ridley to Consul Hankow, 23/3/09. French Ridley was a missionary with the China inland mission based in Kansu. He gave regular reports to Hankow which provided valuable information to Jordan in Peking about this little-known area.
71 F0535/11, 11, Sir Cecil Spring-Rice to Sir Edward Grey, 1/2/09. As British minister in St Petersburg, Spring-Rice recorded this private conversation with Sven Hedin in which the latter concluded that English prestige was practically non-existent in Tibet.
72 Minto Papers, MSS12638, 102–118, Brief Memo. of the Chief Measures Undertaken in the For. Dept. During Lord Minto's Administration, 'Re-organisation of the Political Dept., V1, North East Frontier', Report by Harcourt Butler, Nov. 1910 (Private and Secret).
73 FO535/12, 38, War Office to Foreign Office, 6/8/09.

5 Revolution, invasion and independence: Britain, Tibet and China, 1910–1913

1 Lord Charles Hardinge of Penshurst (1859–1944). Viceroy of India, 1910–1916. Permanent Undersecretary of State for Foreign Affairs, 1916–1921. Marquess of Crewe (1858–1945). Lord-Lieutenant Secretary of Ireland (1892) and Secretary of State for India between 1910 and 1915. During 1911 he visited India during the arrangements for the transfer of the capital from Calcutta to Delhi, making him one of the few secretaries of state to do so.

Crewe and Hardinge had known each other for over forty years. Although from different political backgrounds (Crewe a Liberal and Hardinge a Conservative), their very similar diplomatic experiences allowed them to work well together.

2 Tawang tract was a strip of territory 80 miles wide which extended from the crests of the main Himalayan ranges and down the Brahmaputra valley in Assam. The area was distinctly Tibetan in character and contained the monastery of Tawang, sister house to the powerful pro-Chinese Drepung monastery near Lhasa. Between 1913 and 1919 the Indian government regarded it as part of the north-east frontier territory and later still as the Kameng division of its north-east frontier agency.

3 CD5240, 314, Letter, India Office to Foreign Office, 22/2/10.

4 FO535/14, 15, Jordan to Grey (Confidential), 7/1/11; Encl. G.C. Wilkinson to Max-Muller (Confidential), Chengtu, 12/12/10. A. Lamb, *The McMahon Line, 1904–14: A Study in the Relations Between India, China and Tibet*, Vol. 1, pp. 279–80, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1966.

5 Pome was a Tibetan district in an area where the Tsangpo river turns south-west towards the Assam Himalayas to become the Brahmaputra river. Largely unexplored by westerners, it had been an object of interest to both Britain and China because of its reputed commercial potential. Jordan had sent Hosie to investigate the area, much to the annoyance of Campbell at the Far Eastern Department, who found his very detailed reports tiresome reading. Together with neighbouring Zayaul, it commanded the shortest route between Lhasa and the Chinese province of Yunnan, offering a tempting alternative to the longer Lhasa–Sichuan road. The people of Pome were of mixed Chinese and Tibetan blood, and naturally resented what they regarded as Chinese intrusion after years of virtual independence. Zayaul was a tribal area located at a much lower altitude. Its rich and fertile soil was attractive to Chao Erh Feng as a site for colonial expansion, his earlier attempts to establish a colony at Batang having failed miserably due to the poor climate which made rice growing impossible.

6 Hardinge Papers, Vol. 81, 5, Hare to Hardinge, 24/11/10; 146, Lt. Gvnr. Burma Adamson to Hardinge, 12/12/11. D.P. Choudhury, *The North-East Frontier of India, 1865–1914*, pp. 58–60, The Asiatic Society, Calcutta, 1978, quoting Bell to India, No. 1201, Tel., 20/8/10; Bell to India, For. Dept., No. 126, 21/7/09. Dorothy Woodman, *Himalayan Frontiers: A Political Review of British, Chinese, Indian and Russian Rivalries*, p. 135, Barrie and Rockcliff, London, 1969.

7 Ibid., p. 61, quoting Minto to Morley, Tel., 23/10/10.

8 See note 5 above.

9 Abor Blue Book, CD5961, East India (north-east frontier), ‘Operations Against the Abors, 1911’. FO535/14, 65, Jordan to Grey, 22/7/11. The Abor inhabited the river system of the Dihang (Siang). Although they had previously enjoyed a reputation as fierce plunderers and slavetakers, based upon accounts of their attacks on the Indian foothills, increasing contact with the British during the nineteenth century had largely dispelled this image and their involvement in Williamson’s death was never successfully proven. Even though reports of Chinese activity in the area led many to speculate on their direct involvement, the Abor were nevertheless officially blamed for the murder and a punitive expedition was sent against them in October 1911 which resulted in even greater British involvement in Abor affairs. By 1914 their tribal area, together with that of the Mishmi and Miri, came under loose Indian control.

10 The village of Pienma was on the watershed of the disputed Sino-Burmese border. It was occupied by the Chinese when its inhabitants refused to pay increased taxes on the coffin wood which they supplied to Yunnan.

11 Jordan Papers, 350/1, Campbell to Jordan, 3/6/11; 24, Campbell to Jordan, 3/3/11. W. Palace, 'Sir John Jordan and the Burma Border, 1906–12', *Asian Affairs*, February 2001.
12 FO535/14, 90, Foreign Office to India Office, 6/11/11.
13 FO535/14, 61, India Office to Foreign Office, 26/7/11.
14 FO535/13, 155, Gvt. of India to India Office, 1/9/10; 92, Campbell to Hardinge, 7/11/11; 100, India Office to Foreign Office, 29/11/11.
15 Lieutenant-Colonel James Weir (1883–1950). British trade agent at Gyantse between 1909 and 1912. Later P.O. Sikkim between 1926 and 1928 and leader of British missions to Lhasa in 1924 and 1933. FO535/14, 20, India Office to Foreign Office, 15/3/11, Encl. 1, Bell to Gvt. of India, Camp Darjeeling, 26/1/11; Encl. 2, Weir to Bell (Very Confidential), Gyantse, 15/12/10; 10, India Office to Foreign Office, 15/3/11, Encl. 2, Weir to Bell, 28/11/10; India Office to Foreign Office, 8/2/11, Encl. 1, Gvt. of India to Bell, Fort William, 24/12/10.
16 FO535/14, 20, Indian Office to Foreign Office, 15/3/11, Encl. 4, Mr Ma to Weir, Gyantse, 8/12/10; Encl. 5, Weir to Ma, 11/12/10.
17 FO535/14, 26, India Office to Foreign Office, 3/4/11; 27, Jordan to Grey, 7/4/11; 28, Grey to Jordan, 11/4/11.
18 FO535/14, 38, India Office to Foreign Office, 10/5/11, Encl. 1, Bell to Gvt. of India, 10/4/11, Encl. 2, Bell to Gvt. of India (Confidential), 27/3/11; Encl. 3, Lease for Site of British Trade Agency, Gyantse, Tibet.
19 FO535/14, 20, India Office to Foreign Office, 15/3/11, Encl. 1, Bell to Gvt. of India, Camp Darjeeling (Confidential), 26/1/11.
20 FO535/14, 52, Crewe to Gvt. of India, 10/7/11; 53, India Office to Foreign Office, 6/7/11; 48, India Office to Foreign Office, 20/1/11.
21 FO535/14, 48, India Office to Foreign Office, 20/6/11, Encl. 2, Bell to Gvt. of India, Camp Darjeeling, 29/3/11; Encl. 3, Bell to Gvt. of India, Camp Darjeeling, 20/3/11; 49, Jordan to Grey, 26/11/11.
22 FO535/14, 52, India Office to Foreign Office, 4/7/11, Encl., Crewe to Gvt. of India, 10/7/11.
23 FO535/14, 7, India Office to Foreign Office, 3/2/11; 12, India Office to Foreign Office, 23/2/11.
24 FO535/14, 36, Jordan to Grey, 20/4/11.
25 FO535/14, 17, India Office to Foreign Office, 3/2/11; 12, India Office to Foreign Office, 23/2/11, Encl., Gvt. of India to Crewe, 11/2/11; 23, India Office to Foreign Office, 25/3/11; 13, Foreign Office to India Office, 2/3/11. The main problem seemed to be that some Tibetans believed that the noises made by the wind blowing across the wires were the voices of evil spirits, and they pulled them down wherever they could.
26 FO535/14, 36, Jordan to Grey, 20/4/11, Encl. Ch'ing to Jordan, 18/4/11; Grey to Jordan, 15/6/11; 74, Jordan to Grey, 16/8/11; 85, Jordan to Grey, 27/9/11; 91, India Office to Foreign Office, 6/11/11, Encl. Crewe to Gvt. of India, 2/11/11.
27 FO535/13, 128, Max-Muller to Grey, 12/8/10; 164, India Office to Foreign Office, 28/9/10.
28 FO535/13, 164, India Office to Foreign Office, 29/9/10, Encl. 2, Gvt. of India to India Office, Tel., 21/9/10; 165, Max-Muller to Grey, 10/9/10; 174, Max-Muller to Grey, 4/10/10.
29 FO535/13, 168, Max-Muller to Grey, 2/10/10; 188, India Office to Foreign Office, 17/11/10, Encl., Gvt. of India to India Office, 17/11/10.
30 FO535/14, 3, India Office to Foreign Office, 4/3/11. According to Bell the Panchen Lama was being encouraged to act as the Dalai Lama and was their virtual prisoner in Lhasa.

31 FO535/13, 185, India Office to Foreign Office, 10/11/10, Encl., Gvt. of India to Crewe, Tel., Report from T.A. Gyantse, 7/11/10.
32 For example, FO535/13, 164, India Office to Foreign Office, 28/9/10, Encl. 3, Gvt. of India to Morley, 21/9/10; 92, India Office to Foreign Office, 8/12/10, Encl., Gvt. of India to Crewe, Tel., 6/12/10.
33 FO535/15, 41, Wilkinson to Jordan, 1/2/12. Jordan Papers, 350/1, 61, Campbell to Jordan, 12/10/11.
34 FO535/15, 67, Jordan to Grey, 1/2/12.
35 FO535/14, 96, India Office to Foreign Office, 21/12/11, Encl., Gvt. of India to Crewe, 20/12/11; 11, Jordan to Grey, 16/11/111, Encl. 1, G.C. Wilkinson to Jordan, Chengtu, 10/10/11 (Confidential), Encl. 2, 'Report On Conditions on the Chinese-Tibetan Border, J. Muir'. Muir was a missionary stationed in Batang and another invaluable source of information for Jordan.
36 FO535/14, 112, India Office to Foreign Office, 27/12/11; 101, Gvt of India to Crewe, 30/11/11.
37 FO535/14, 99, India Office to Foreign Office, 29/11/11, Encl., Gvt. of India to Crewe, 28/11/11. The Dalai Lama had told Bell that he had never ordered the killing but that he had instead given orders forbidding the killing of Chinese soldiers, saying that from Gyantse to Sikkim they must be given food and transport free of cost.
38 Yu Tai had been arrested in 1907 on the orders of Chang Yin-tang and taken back to Peking in chains. Lien Yu had kept his nerve and stayed on in Tibet, eventually becoming one of the negotiators of the temporary truce with the Tibetans in August 1912. When his deposition was finally confirmed in September 1912 he refused to return to Peking and lived to fight another day, despite the fact that his arrogant manner had made him unpopular with both the British and the Tibetans.
39 FO535/15, 69, India Office to Foreign Office, 17/5/12; 168, India Office to Foreign Office, 6/8/12, Encl. 2, Gvt. of India to Crewe, 5/8/12; 170, India Office to Foreign Office, 14/8/12, Encl., Gvt. of India to Crewe, 13/8/12.
40 FO535/15, 197, India Office to Foreign Office, 3/9/12.
41 For an eyewitness account of this procession, which took over three hours to pass, see Scott Berry, *Monks, Spies, and a Soldier of Fortune: The Japanese in Tibet*, pp. 115–16, Athlone Press Ltd, London, 1995.
42 FO535/14, 39, Buchanan to Grey, St Petersburg, 24/5/11; 42, India Office to Foreign Office, 31/5/11; 44, Grey to Buchanan, 8/6/11.
43 FO535/14, 39, Buchanan to Grey, St Petersburg, 24/5/11; 42, India Office to Foreign Office, 31/5/11; 44, Grey to Buchanan, 8/6/11.
44 FO535/14, 40, Foreign Office to India Office, 26/5/11; 42, India Office to Foreign Office, 31/5/11; 44, Grey to Buchanan, 8/6/11.
45 FO535/15, 82, India Office to Foreign Office, 1/6/12, Encl., Gvt. of India to Crewe, 31/5/12; 85, India Office to Foreign Office, 3/6/12, Encl. Draft Tel. from Marquess of Crewe to Gvt. of India (Secret); 98, India Office to Foreign Office, 1/6/12 Encl., Crewe to Gvt. of India, 10/6/12.
46 Laden La was a British subject and a superintendent of police in Darjeeling. He had previously worked for the British in Tibet during 1904, and again as a member of the Panchen Lama's suite while he was in India in 1905. In 1912 he joined Bell in Lhasa and stayed on to help organise the Lhasa police force. He eventually left Tibet under a cloud after being implicated in a plot to overthrow the Tsongdu in November 1924.
47 FO535/15, 86, India Office to Foreign Office, 6/6/12, Encl. 2, Crewe to Gvt. of India; 98, India Office to Foreign Office, 11/6/12, Encl., Crewe to Gvt. of India, 10/6/12; 93, India Office to Foreign Office, 8/6/12, Encl., Crewe to Gvt. of India, 6/6/12, Encl. 1, Gvt. of India to Crewe, 17/6/12, Encl. 2, Gvt. of

India to Crewe, 17/6/12; 159, India Office to Foreign Office, 18/7/12, Encl., Gvt. of India to Crewe, 16/7/12.

48 F0535/15, 116, Foreign Office to India Office, 20/6/12; 124, India Office to Foreign Office, 22/6/12, Encl., Crewe to Gvt. of India, 21/6/12; 104, India Office to Foreign Office, 14/6/12.

49 FO535/14, 106, Buchanan to Grey, 7/12/11.

50 FO535/15, 177, India Office to Foreign Office, 5/8/12 (Confidential), Encl., Gvt. of India to Crewe, 27/7/12. For a detailed account of events in Sinkiang from the perspective of the British representative in Kashgar, see C.P. Skrine and P. Nightingale, *Macartney at Kashgar: New Light on British, Chinese and Russian Activities in Sinkiang, 1890–1918*, Methuen & Co., London, 1973.

51 FO535/15, 219, Buchanan to Grey, 18/9/12. CD6640, Further Papers Relating to Tibet, 1912–1913, 2, Trans. Russo-Mongolian Agreement and Protocol, 21/10/12.

52 FO535/15/226, Note on Tibet by Grey, 24/9/12; 229, Extract from Note of Conversation between the Marquess of Crewe and M. Sazonov at Crewe Hall, 29/9/12.

53 FO535/16, 88, Buchanan to Grey, 11/2/13, Encl. 1, Tibet–Mongolian Treaty Concluded at Urga, 29/12/12.

54 FO535/16, 88, Buchanan to Grey, 11/12/13, Encl. 2, Despatch from Actual State Councillor Koroslovets, Dated Urga, January 6th 1913; 92, Buchanan to Grey, 13/3/13; 107, Foreign Office to India Office, 24/2/13; 23, Buchanan to Grey, 13/1/13.

55 FO535/16, 429, Alston to Grey, 1/11/13, Encl., Extract from Lt. Binstead on a Journey from Hailar to Urga, and Thence to Kiakhta.

6 The Simla Conference and the bipartite settlement, 1912–1914

1 Jordan Papers, 350/7, 25/3/11. See Chapter 4, note 10. Yuan Shih Kai had become the strongest military leader in China during the 1890s. He had managed to avoid being directly implicated in the plots to overthrow the Manchu dynasty during 1898 but was forced out of office in 1907. He then re-emerged with the collapse of the Manchu in October 1911 as the ‘honest broker’ between the Manchu court and the revolutionaries. When the young emperor, Pu-yi, was forced to abdicate in 1912, Sun Yat-sen made Yuan Shih Kai provisional president of the new Chinese Republic.

2 FO535/15, 57, India Office to Foreign Office, 30/4/12; FO535/14, 102, Jordan to Grey, Tel., 3/4/12. For a detailed examination of forward policy in this period, see S.A.M. Adshead, *Province and Politics in Late Imperial China: Viceregal Government in Szechuan, 1898–1911*, Scandinavian Institute of Asian Studies, Monograph Series No. 50, Curzon Press, London, 1984.

3 FO535/15, 67, Jordan to Grey, 27/4/12; 127, Jordan to Grey, 6/6/12.

4 FO535/15, 177, India Office to Foreign Office, 15/8/12, Minute by R.T. Nugent, 26/8/12.

5 FO535/15, 241, Jordan to Grey, 21/9/12; 288, Jordan to Grey, 4/11/12; 299, Questions asked in the House of Commons, 5/12/12; 120, Jordan to Grey, 23/6/12; 132, Grey to Jordan, 29/6/12.

6 FO535/15, 50, Jordan to Grey, 12/4/12; 267, Jordan to Grey, 29/10/12.

7 FO535/15, 67, Jordan to Grey, 27/4/12; 127, Jordan to Grey, 6/6/12.

8 FO535/15, 62, India Office to Foreign Office, 8/5/12; 67, Jordan to Grey, 27/4/12; 75, Grey to Jordan, 22/5/12; 102, India Office to Foreign Office, 13/6/12; 118, India Office to Foreign Office, 19/6/12, Encl., Gvt. of India to Crewe, 21/6/12; 127, Jordan to Grey, 6/6/12.

9 FO535/15, 177, India Office to Foreign Office, 15/8/12, Minute by R.T. Nugent, 26/8/12; 120, Jordan to Grey, 23/6/12.
10 FO535/15, 182, Jordan to Grey, 2/8/12.
11 Ibid. Also Hardinge Papers, Vol. 81, Hardinge to Crewe, 3/6/14. This personal attack on Jordan may also have been related to resentment in India about the Opium Agreement of 1912 which he had successfully negotiated. Although welcoming the settlement in principle, Hardinge had been annoyed by what he saw as Jordan's refusal to secure adequate compensation for India's loss of the vital source of revenue provided by the opium trade.
12 FO535/15, Sir John Jordan to Wai Chaio Pu, 17/8/12.
13 The Wai Chaio Pu was set up by the new Republican regime to replace the Wai Wu Pu. The youth faction known as the Young China Party, and its leader Dr Yen, had been heavily involved in its creation, and since many of its new members had been educated in the west much of its business with British diplomats was conducted in English. It survived into the Kuomintang era.
14 FO535/15, Jordan to Grey, 16/12/12, Encl., Memorandum Respecting Conversation Between Dr Yen and Sir John Jordan on 14th December, 1912; Jordan to Crewe, 31/1/13.
15 FO535/16, Jordan to Hardinge, 10/4/13. Even Morrison, who had recommended Jordan's appointment as British minister in 1906, now began to turn against him. For example, Morrison to Campbell, 24/10/12; Morrison to Brahman, 13/4/11; Morrison to Hillier, 17/2/13; C.W. Campbell to Morrison, Private, 12/1/13. Quoted in Lo Hui-min (ed.), *The Correspondence of G.E. Morrison, 1895–1920*, Vol. II, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1978.
16 FO535/16, 180, Grey to Jordan, 5/4/13. Wen T'sung Yao had the kind of liberal views rarely found in a Manchu official and had been trusted by the Tibetans, even though he had supported the Republican government's Five Races Decree. He had resigned over the Chinese occupation of Lhasa in 1910. Ivan Chen had been second councillor to the Chinese legation in London between 1903 and 1911 and had earned himself a reputation for reasonable discussion, which had endeared him to the Foreign Office.
17 The post of pacificator was introduced by the new Republican government. The British feared that the pacificator was really just an attempt to reintroduce *ambans* who, at the height of their powers, could take an active part in the selection of a new Dalai Lama. After 1908 the Dalai Lama's power to memorialise the throne directly had been taken away, and the last Manchu *amban*, Lien Yu, had abused his power by interfering in the internal affairs of Tibet.
18 Alston apparently arrived in Peking in the summer of 1913 to relieve Jordan and discovered him 'almost too tired to talk'. Alston Papers, Alston to Langley, Private, 2/6/13. Quoted in Lau Kit-ching, 'Sir John Jordan and the Affairs of China, 1906–16', p. 11, Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, London University, 1968.
19 Morrison Papers, MSS/312/1259, Tibetan Dossier. These contain Morrison's extensive notes on conference proceedings.
20 Jordan Papers 350/11, Jordan to Langley, 30/11/13. As doyen of the legations since February 1911, Jordan had more to do with the Chinese Customs Service than other legation heads. The problems generated by their obligations to the Chinese government were a constant source of tension between the Services.
21 FO535/15, 177, India Office to Foreign Office, 15/8/12. Morrison Papers, MSS 312/1259, 269, Chen to Morrison, 10/11/13, Tibetan Telegrams, 8/10/13.
22 Henry McMahon (1862–1949). McMahon had joined the Politicals in 1890 and had served as a political agent in various parts of the north-west frontier of India. Between 1894 and 1896 he had been responsible for the demarcation of a boundary between Baluchistan and Afghanistan.

23 Morrison Papers, MSS/312/1259, Tibetan Dossier. Lonchen Shatra (Shatra Paljor Dorje) was the most pro-British of all the Dalai Lama's ministers. In 1904 he had been imprisoned by the Lhasa authorities for his pro-British sympathies, which he had probably acquired while living in Darjeeling from 1894–1895. He had been given the title 'Lonchen' (Great Minister) by the Dalai Lama in 1907 and had accompanied him to India between 1910 and 1912. After the Simla Conference in 1914 he was once again criticised by the Tsongdu, this time for his apparent readiness to accept the British terms at Simla.

24 Morrison Papers, MSS/312/1259, Tibetan Dossier, Tibetan Claims, 10/10/13; 13/10/13; Chinese Counter Claims, 30/10/13. Bell and his wife visited Lhasa in order to help the Lonchen Shatra prepare his evidence before the conference.

25 Ibid. FO 535/17, 6, India Office to Foreign Office, 12/11/14, Encl. 1, Memorandum of Informal Discussions Referring to Tibetan Conference Containing MacMahon's 'Memorandum'. This document charts his changing views throughout.

26 Morrison Papers MSS/1259, 263–6, Chen to Morrison, Oct.–Nov. 1913.

27 FO535/17, 6, India Office to Foreign Office, 12/11/14, Encl. 2, Memorandum of Informal Discussions Relating to the Tibetan Conference enclosing MacMahon's Memorandum. Morrison Papers MSS/1259, Tibetan Dossier, Chinese Counter Claims, 30/10/13.

28 Morrison Papers, MSS312/259, 267–9, Tibetan Dossier, 28/4/14. FO535/17, 6, India Office to Foreign Office, 12/11/14, Encl. 1, Informal Discussions Relating to the Tibetan Conference.

29 FO535/17, 6, India Office to Foreign Office, 12/11/14, Encl. 2, Memorandum of Informal Discussions Relating to the Tibetan Conference Enclosing McMahon's Memorandum.

30 Jordan Papers 350/11, Jordan to Langley, 29/12/13.

31 Morrison Papers MSS312/259, Tibetan Dossier, 267–9, 28/4/14. See note 16 above.

32 This view was supported by Morrison, who was Chen's confidant for the duration of the talks. See, for example, Morrison Papers MSS12/259, 137, Defence of Chen, 12/11/14.

33 Jordan Papers 350/12, Jordan to Langley, 1/6/14.

34 Morrison Papers MSS312/259, Tibetan Dossier. This was not a view shared by Jordan and Langley who both became exasperated by the slow progress of the talks, which they interpreted as yet another fault of the Indian administration. See, for example, Jordan Papers 350/11, Langley to Jordan, 26/3/13; 350/12, Jordan to Langley, 4/5/14.

35 Morrison Papers MSS 312/259, 28, 55–7, Reuters Reports on the Frontier, March 1914.

36 Morrison Papers MSS312/259, 129–34, 147–201. This details the correspondence between Chen and Morrison between 1914 and 1920. See note 23 above.

37 Jordan Papers 350/12, Jordan to Langley, 1/6/14; 350/11, Langley to Jordan, 18/11/14.

38 Jordan Papers 350/12, Jordan to Langley, 30/11/13; Jordan to Langley, 4/12/13; Jordan to Langley, 8/3/14; Jordan to Langley, 6/4/14; Jordan to Langley, 28/6/14.

39 Hardinge Papers, Hardinge to Crewe, 25/6/14.

40 Hardinge Papers, Hardinge to Crewe, 2/7/14; Hardinge to Crewe, 9/7/14.

41 Text of the bipartite treaty may be found in P. Mehra, *The North-Eastern Frontier: A Documentary Study of Internecine Rivalry Between India, Tibet and China, 1906–14*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1979.

42 Hardinge Papers, Hardinge to Holderness, 13/5/14.
43 See note 41 above.
44 Ibid.
45 FO535/17, 6, Final Memorandum, 249, Jordan to Foreign Office.
46 Walt van Praag, *The Status of Tibet: History, Rights and Prospects in International Law*, pp. 59–60, Wisdom Publications, London, 1987.

7 The China Service and East Tibet, 1914–1918

1 By 1914 it was generally acknowledged that despite the Foreign Office Reforms of 1906 diplomats were still unable to keep pace with the vastly increased workload, and the MacDonnell Commission was ordered to investigate its procedures. During the course of the First World War Prime Minister Lloyd George introduced new blood into the Foreign Office, and in 1919 the Foreign Office and the Diplomatic Service were amalgamated. For more detailed information about this period, see Zara Steiner *The Foreign Office and Foreign Policy, 1898–1914*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1969.

Viscount Chelmsford (1863–1933), viceroy of India, 1916–1921. Sir Austen Chamberlain (1863–1937), secretary of state for India, 1915–1917. Chamberlain resigned over the Mesopotamia campaign in 1917 to be replaced by Sir Edwin Montagu in June 1913.
2 Hardinge had been forced to withdraw large numbers of Indian troops from the north-west frontier for service on the European front at a time of serious disturbances. B.C. Busch, *Hardinge of Penshurst: A Study in Old Diplomacy*, pp. 234, 263, Anchor Books, South Bend, Indiana, 1980. John Murray, London, 1947. Hardinge, *My Indian Years*, pp. 100–1, 107, 131–2, John Murray, London, 1933.
3 Jordan Papers 350/15, Jordan to Langley, 14/1/16. Correspondence which had previously taken only days to reach Peking from London was now taking six weeks via the overland route. During the summer of 1913 Beilby Alston had relieved Jordan in Peking.
4 FO535/17, 42, India Office to Foreign Office, Encl. 1, Gvt. of India to Chamberlain, 2/10/15. Ta-chien-lu (now Kangding) was situated nearly 10,000 ft above sea level and was a key commercial centre for the Sino-Tibetan trade. In 1912 it became the seat of the new Chinese frontier commissioner.
5 FO228/2749, Reports from Ta-chien-lu. Oliver Robert Coales, consul-general at Ta-chien-lu 1916–1917; Louis Macgarth King, vice-consul at Ta-chien-lu, 1913–1915 and again between 1919 and 1922. King married a Tibetan lady and was forced to retire on a meagre pension.
6 Jordan Papers, 350/15, Jordan to Langley, 13/6/16. Rumours circulating at the time suggested that the President may have been poisoned.
7 For first-hand accounts of life in revolutionary Chengdu from the point of view of the British consul-general in the city, see Meyrick Hewlett, *Forty years in China*, Macmillan & Co. Ltd, London, 1944.
8 FO535/19, India Office to Foreign Office, Encl. 3, Bell to Gvt. of India, 27/1/16. For further information about the new Tibetan army, see Melvyn Goldstein, *A History of Modern Tibet, 1913–51: The Demise of the Lamaist State*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1989.
9 F0228/2749, Louis King, Reports from Ta-chien-lu, 1915–1916.
10 Eric Teichman, *Travels of a Consular Officer in Eastern Tibet*, p. 59, Cambridge, 1922.
11 Jordan Papers 350/12, Jordan to Langley, 1/6/14.
12 Jordan Papers 350/12, Jordan to Langley, 10/6/16. Lo Hui-min (ed.) *The Correspondence of G.E. Morrison, 1895–1920*, 2 vols, Cambridge University Press,

Cambridge, 1976 and 1978. Morrison to Campbell, 24/10/12; Morrison to Browning, Peking, 14/10/16. Morrison to Fraser, 12/10/16. Morrison's antagonism may have had something to do with the fact that, having become an employee of the Republican government, Jordan was less willing to trust him with confidential information as had been the case in the past.

13 Note 6 above. F0228/2749, File 7, 23, Coales report From Ta-chien-lu, 21/5/16; File 26, Coales Report from Ta-chien-lu, 20/6/16; File 32, 12, Coales Report from Ta-chien-lu, 5/7/16; File 43, Coales Report from Ta-chien-lu, 26/9/16. The difficulty of securing reliable information about the situation led Coales, King and Teichman to launch exploratory missions of their own.

14 Jordan Papers 350/15, Jordan to Langley, 13/6/16; 350/14, Jordan to Langley, 12/5/16. FO228/2749, File 118, Personal letter to Sir John Jordan by John R. Muir, China Inland Mission, Tibetan Branch, 2/11/17. FO535/20, 6, Jordan to Foreign Office, 24/9/16.

15 Hardinge Papers, Hardinge to Crewe, 25/6/14. Lo Hui-min, *The Correspondence of G.E. Morrison*, Vol. II, C.W. Campbell to Morrison, Private, 12/1/13. Hugh Richardson, *Tibet and its History*, p. 68, Oxford University Press, London, 1962.

16 Eric Teichman (1884–1944). He had previously travelled extensively in northwest China and subsequently published an account of his experiences in *Travels of a Consular Officer in North-West China*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1921.

17 FO 228/2749, File 122, 19, Reports from Ta-chien-lu, 21/11/17.

18 See note 13 above. FO228/2749, No. 1, King's Report from Ta-chien-lu, 27/11/15; No. 20, Coales's Report from Ta-chien-lu, 10/4/16; File 43, 15, Coales's Report from Ta-chien-lu, 26/9/17.

19 FO228/2749, File 51, 19, Coales's Report from Ta-chien-lu, 1/11/16. Coales described Yin as 'cruel' and 'opium sodden'.

20 FO228/2749, File 117, 18, Coales's Report from Ta-chien-lu, Nov. 1917.

21 FO228/2749, File 122, 19, Teichman's Report from Ta-chien-lu, 21/11/17.

22 Alastair Lamb, *Tibet, China, and India, 1914–50: A History of Imperial Diplomacy*, p. 53, Roxford Books, Hertingfordbury, 1989. Lamb concludes that Jordan had privately told Teichman to see what he could arrange about the situation in East Tibet without drawing the British legation directly into the diplomacy. Lamb also believes that Teichman was subsequently allowed to publish his work in book form in order to present the British case in his Introduction.

23 FO228/2749, File 57, 23, Coales's Report, 1/2/16; File 61, 5, Unsigned Report on Coales's Trip to Batang, 1/11/17; File 74, Undated Report Enclosing Letter, Wai Chaio Pu to chargé d'affaires Peking, Requesting Coales's Recall, 3/5/17.

24 FO228/2749, Teichman's Report, 12/6/18.

25 Louis King believed that P'eng's evil reputation had been exaggerated and that in fact the monastery at Chamdo had been destroyed by Chao's forces at an earlier date.

26 Teichman, *Travels of a Consular Officer in Eastern Tibet*, pp. 52–6.

27 Ibid., pp. 52–6. India Office Files L/P&S, 10/883, King to Jordan, 13/2/20. Louis King, *China in Turmoil: Studies in Personality*, Heath Cranton Ltd, London, 1927. Louis Magarth King had been a member of the China Service since he was twenty and was the son of a Customs official and a missionary. Although the posting to Ta-chien-lu represented a promotion King was never made consul-general, in spite of serving two terms there. See note 5 above.

28 FO228/2956, Teichman Report, January 1918. Teichman, *Travels of a Consular Officer in Eastern Tibet*, pp. 55–6. As commander-in-chief of Tibet's new modernised army in East Tibet, the Kalon Lama was admired and respected by Tibetans. He was concerned to effect a Sino-Tibetan settlement with or without

British involvement and was prepared to co-operate with Teichman to this end. Louis King met him in 1920 and later reported rumours that the Kalon Lama had been murdered in late May or early June 1923.

29 Teichman, *Travels of a Consular Officer in Eastern Tibet*, pp. 55–6, 118–19. Chamdo monastery had once dominated this important spiritual and commercial centre. By the time Teichman arrived there, however, the city seemed to him little more than a village without its monastery. See note 25 above.

30 FO228/2956, 20, Teichman's Report, 12/6/18. Teichman, *Travels of a Consular Officer in Eastern Tibet*, pp. 73, 116–17.

31 This system, known as *ula*, required the provision of labour and pack animals for officials and important persons travelling in the area and was naturally deeply resented in some areas. It was absolutely essential in administrative terms if the vast distances involved were to be covered.

32 Teichman, *Travels of a Consular Officer in Eastern Tibet*, pp. 77, 84, 90, 97–9.

33 Ibid., p. 97.

34 Ibid., p. 99.

35 Ibid., pp. 99, 103. See notes 28 and 31 above.

36 Teichman, *Travels of a Consular Officer in Eastern Tibet*, pp. 116–17.

37 Ibid., pp. 116–19, 121.

38 Ibid., pp. 118, 121–2.

39 One of a group of American Protestant missionaries based in Batang since 1908, Dr Shelton and his wife Flora had travelled extensively in East Tibet where he was known and trusted by many local Tibetans. He was later murdered by bandits in 1922 after an abortive attempt to reach Lhasa. Details of his life and work may be found in Flora B. Shelton, *Shelton of Tibet*, George H. Doran Company, New York, 1923.

40 Teichman, *Travels of a Consular Officer in Eastern Tibet*, pp. 131–2.

41 Ibid., p. 140. Shelton, *Shelton of Tibet*, pp. 195–6, 198–9.

42 F0228/2956, Teichman to Jordan, 20/5/18.

43 Teichman, *Travels of a Consular Officer in Eastern Tibet*, pp. 136–40. Formerly a Tibetan state under the protection of the Sichuanese authorities, Batang had been brought under direct Chinese control after the Tibetan uprising of 1905 and its great monastery destroyed. It then became the headquarters for Chinese troops as well as a large centre for missionary activity with French Catholic and American Protestant missions located in the city.

44 Teichman, *Travels of a Consular Officer in Eastern Tibet*, pp. 134–5, 140–1.

45 Ibid., pp. 145, 149.

46 Ibid., pp. 150–1. The prince of Chala was a local chieftain often referred to as the king of Chala. The kingdom of Chala had been independent, but in 1903 it was invaded by Tibetan troops loyal to the Dalai Lama. During this time the Chinese had offered military assistance, but the British invasion of Tibet in the same year called a halt to all military activity in East Tibet. The prince of Chala's popularity with Christian missionaries and fellow Tibetans had made him unpopular with the Sichuanese government who took it upon themselves to depose him in 1911. To avoid being directly invaded by China, the prince had agreed to work for them as an intermediary with other Tibetan states. From his palace just outside Ta-chien-lu, however, he hedged his bets by supplying valuable information about Chinese activities in the area to the British legation in Peking. He was later arrested and imprisoned by the Chinese and was eventually murdered while trying to escape Ta-chien-lu in July 1922.

47 FO228/2956, Teichman to Jordan, 26/8/18. Teichman may also have found that this delay suited him by providing him with an excuse to act upon his own initiative. See note 58 below.

48 Ibid. For some idea of the general confusion in Chengdu at this time, see Hewlett, *Forty years in China*, pp. 5–8.
49 FO228/2956, Teichman to Jordan, 20/5/18; File 138b, Teichman to Hewlett (undated); File 126, Tel., 22/8/18; File 127, Simla to Peking, 21/8/18. Full Text of the Chamdo truce may be found in A. Lamb, *Tibet, China and India: 1914–50*, pp. 64–8.
50 Teichman, *Travels of a Consular Officer in Eastern Tibet*, p. 153.
51 Ibid., p. 163.
52 Ibid., pp. 164–7.
53 Ibid., p. 165.
54 Ibid., p. 168. Text of the Rongbasta truce in P. Mehra, *The North-Eastern Frontier: A Documentary Study of Internecine Rivalry Between India, Tibet and China, 1906–14*, Vol. 2, pp. 9–10, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1979.
55 Teichman, *Travels of a Consular Officer in Eastern Tibet*, p. 169.
56 Chamdo Agreement, Additional Article, Note 131. See note 54 above.
57 In fact Dr Shelton was murdered by bandits in 1922 while trying to reach Lhasa. Aged only 47, he left a wife and two daughters. See note 39 above.
58 FO228/2956, File 128, Tel., Jordan to Teichman, 26/8/18. Teichman, *Travels of a Consular Officer in Eastern Tibet*, p. 170. See note 47 above.
59 Jordan Papers, 350/16, Jordan to Langley, 7/5/18; Jordan to McLeavy, 14/8/18.
60 FO228/2956, File 128, Jordan to Teichman, 26/8/18. Jordan Papers, 350/16, Jordan to Langley, 2/8/18. When he eventually returned from East Tibet in 1919 Teichman resumed his post at the Peking legation and was promoted to Chinese secretary in 1924. He retired from the Consular Service in 1936 but was asked to return briefly in 1942 to advise on negotiations concerning the ending of extra-territoriality in China. In 1944 he finally retired to Honingham Hall in Norfolk where he was shot dead by an American serviceman believed to have been trespassing on his land.
61 After Louis King finally left Ta-chien-lu in 1922, Paul Sherap, a Christian of mixed Mongolian and Tibetan blood, worked there occasionally as British representative between 1924 and 1928 when the post was abandoned by the British.

8 Lhasa unveiled: Britain and Tibet in the post-war world, 1918–1922

1 FO535/22, 1, Jordan to Curzon, 305, Secret, 31/5/19; 2, Jordan to Curzon, 1/7/19; 4, India Office to Foreign Office, 21/7/19, Encl. 2, Gvt. of India to Montagu, 27/6/19.
2 FO535/22, 5, Foreign Office to India Office, 30/7/19; 8, Jordan to Curzon, 1/6/19. In 1916 Curzon became a member of Lloyd George's War Cabinet, emerging as foreign secretary in 1919 despite the fact that he remained deeply sceptical of the new diplomacy.
3 FO535/22, 9, Jordan to Curzon, 14/8/19; 13, Jordan to Curzon, 29/8/19; 21, Jordan to Curzon, 23/10/19; 24, Jordan to Curzon, 20/11/19; 29, Jordan to Curzon, 18/10/19.
4 FO535/22, 24, Jordan to Curzon, 9/9/19; 27, Curzon to Jordan, Nov. 1919; 31, Alfred Sze to Curzon, 6/12/19.
5 FO535/23, 2, India Office to Foreign Office, 5/1/20; FO535/22, 32, Foreign Office to India Office, 11/12/19.
6 FO535/21, Alfred Sze to Curzon, 6/12/19. Alfred Sze (Chih Chao-chi) (1877–1958). One of the new breed of Chinese diplomats educated outside China. Sze had held various posts in the Chinese Customs Service before becoming minister of communications in the new Republican government in

1912. Much admired by Jordan, he was China's Minister to London between 1914 and 1921.

7 FO535/23, 2, India Office to Foreign Office, 5/1/20.

8 Even at the age of 68, Jordan's retirement was criticised and resented by many China hands, including George Morrison, Jordan's fiercest critic in previous years. Morrison and others believed that Jordan had recovered much of his acumen, lost in the aftermath of Yuan Shih Kai's sudden death in 1916. See, for example, Lo Hui-min, *The Correspondence of G.E. Morrison, 1895–1920*, 2 vols, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1976 and 1978, Morrison to Prothero, Peking, 22/5/16.

9 FO535/23, 2, India Office to Foreign Office, 5/1/20; 3, Curzon to Jordan, 9/1/20; FO535/22, 32, Foreign Office to India Office, 11/12/19. Sir Edwin Montagu (1879–1924). Liberal MP for Chesterton, Cambs. between 1906 and 1922. Parliamentary undersecretary for India between 1910 and 1914 before becoming secretary of state for India between June 1917 and March 1922. In 1918 he co-signed the Montagu–Chelmsford reforms.

10 FO535/24, 36, Foreign Office to India Office, 13/4/21. Wellington Vikuiyuin Koo (1887–1985), American-educated Chinese diplomat much respected by the British. Between 1911 and 1914 secretary to the Chinese president and a prominent member of the Wai Chaio Pu. In 1915 he became Chinese minister to America and from 1919–1920 led the Chinese delegation to the Paris peace talks. In 1921 he was appointed Chinese minister to London and, from 1921–1922, was Chinese plenipotentiary to the Washington Conference.

11 FO535/24, 36, Foreign Office to India Office, 13/4/21; 52, Alston to Curzon, 20/5/21.

12 FO535/25, 8, Foreign Office to India Office, 29/7/21; FO535/24, 24, Curzon to Alston, 27/8/21; 25, Curzon to Alston, 27/8/21; 28, Alston to Curzon, 31/8/21.

13 FO535/25, 22, Curzon to Alston, 26/8/21; 27, India Office to Foreign Office, 5/9/21, Encl. Gvt. of India to India Office, 31/8/21; 47, India Office to Foreign Office, 21/10/21, Encl. P.O. Sikkim on Special Duty in Tibet to Gvt. of India, 23/9/21.

14 FO535/26, 9, Alston to Curzon, 18/9/22, No. 598, Confidential; 8, Balfour to Crewe (Peking), 6/7/22; 5, India Office to Foreign Office, Encl. India Office to Viceroy, 10/3/22. Japanese agents had lived in Lhasa for many years, often combining monkish studies with spying. While Bell was in Lhasa for example, he met Tada Tokan, a Japanese scholar studying at Drepung monastery who claimed to have lived there for ten years.

15 FO535/7, 130, Grey to Macdonald (B.M. Tokyo), 15/6/06. FO535/9, 30, Nicolson to Grey, 6/1/07.

16 For example, Jordan Papers, 350/3, Jordan to Campbell, 11/1/04; 350/1, Jordan to Alston, 20/1/11.

17 FO535/15, 162, Grey to Macdonald, 24/7/12. Ijuin Hikokichi (1864–1924). Japanese minister to Peking between 1916 and 1920 and later Japanese delegate to the Paris Peace Conference in 1919. His spoken English was very poor. Miyazaki Torazo (1870–1922). Served as an adviser to Sun Yat-sen after 1911 and became an important mediator between the Chinese and Japanese governments.

18 FO535/16, 223, Encl. 1, Gould to P.O. Sikkim, Confidential, 9/4/13. Lungshar had to be quietly removed from India to prevent his further intriguing with the Japanese. Laden La was ordered to accompany Lungshar and his wife to England as chaperone for the four Tibetan boys. Once there, however, Lungshar's wife's promiscuous behaviour created further embarrassment for the

Indian government. The Tibetan boys survived the visit and returned to Tibet to take up responsible administrative positions in the Tibetan government.

19 FO535/16, 396, India Office to Foreign Office, 23/10/13, Encl. 1, Gvt. of India to Crewe, 20/10/13; Encl. 2, Gvt. of India to Crewe, 20/10/13.

20 FO535/16, 396, India Office to Foreign Office, 23/10/13; 406, Foreign Office to India Office, 30/10/13; 411, India Office to Foreign Office, 1/11/13, Encl. Crewe to Gvt. of India, 1/11/13. FO535/17, 21, Buchanan to Grey, 1/2/14; 118, Jordan to Grey, 27/4/14; 116, Grey to Crewe, 10/6/14.

21 FO535/19, 14, India Office to Foreign Office, 31/3/16; 5, Foreign Office to India office, 7/4/16; 6, India Office to Foreign Office, 12/4/16.

22 FO535/19, 6, India Office to Foreign Office, 12/4/16; 7, Foreign Office to India Office, 17/4/16. Sir Austen Chamberlain (1863–1937), Conservative MP for East Worcestershire and chancellor in Balfour's government between 1903 and 1905. Secretary of state for India from 1915–1917, but resigned over the Mesopotamia campaign. Later chancellor of the exchequer (1919–1921) and foreign secretary (1924–1929).

23 FO535/20, 13, India Office to Foreign Office, 19/11/17; 14, Foreign Office to India Office, 23/11/17.

24 FO535/22, 10, Memo by Mr R.H. Clive on the Anti-English Press Campaign Instigated by the Japanese in Regard to the Tibetan Negotiations, 28th August, 1919; 11, Curzon to Jordan, 1/9/19; 12, Curzon to Alston, 1/9/19; 15, Jordan to Curzon, 28/8/19; 17, Curzon to Alston, 20/10/19; 18, Jordan to Curzon, 19/10/19; 20, Jordan to Curzon, 20/11/19.

25 FO535/22, 15, Jordan to Curzon, 28/8/19; 19, Jordan to Curzon, 17/10/19; 20, Jordan to Curzon, 20/11/19; 27, Curzon to Jordan, 26/11/19. Lau Kit-ching, 'Sir John Jordan and the Affairs of China', pp. 3–5, 31.

26 FO535/22, 11, Curzon to Jordan, 1/9/19; 12, Curzon to Alston, 1/9/19; 14, Curzon to Alston, 25/9/19; 15, Jordan to Curzon, 28/8/19.

27 FO535/22, 12, Curzon to Alston, 1/9/19; 17, Curzon to Alston, 20/10/19; 26, Jordan to Curzon, 20/11/19. Jordan's early experience of the Japanese occupation in Korea coloured his latter attitude towards them in Peking. Jordan Papers, 350/3, Jordan to Campbell, 11/1/04.

The Japanese seizure of the Chinese province of Shantung, formerly occupied by Germany, sparked a nationalist movement in China which was intensified by the demands crisis of 1915 when Japan sought to strengthen its influence with the Republican government by presenting them with a list of demands in return for Japanese protection against the west.

Obata Yukichi Japanese minister to China in 1919. Noted for his hard-line approach towards the Chinese during the demands crisis, which continued after his promotion to Japanese minister.

28 FO535/22, 17, Curzon to Alston, 20/10/19; 26, Jordan to Curzon, 20/11/19; 27, Curzon to Jordan, 26/11/19.

29 FO535/23, 1, Jordan to Alston, 20/10/19; 1 Jordan to Curzon, 27/12/19; 2, India Office to Foreign Office, 5/1/20, Encl. 2, Gvt. of India to Montagu, 23/12/19; 4, Jordan to Curzon, 27/12/19.

30 FO535/23, 2, India Office to Foreign Office, Encl. 3, Gvt. of India to Peking, 23/12/19; Curzon to Jordan, 9/1/20; 54, India Office to Foreign Office, 26/11/20, Encl. Gvt. of India to India Office, 22/11/20.

31 FO535/23, 29, India Office to Foreign Office, 15/5/20, Encl. 1, Gvt. of India to India Office, 4/5/20, Encl. 2, Gvt. of India to India Office, 5/5/20; 33, India Office to Foreign Office, 5/7/20, Encl. 1 (Confidential), Chief Minister Tibet to P.O. Sikkim, 14th day 3rd Month Monkey Year, 1/5/20, Encl. 3, P.O. Sikkim to Gvt. of India, 21/5/20, Encl. 4, Dalai Lama to P.O. Sikkim, 7/5/20; 51, India Office to Foreign Office, 18/11/20, Encl. Letters *re* Tibet

from P.O. Sikkim, 24/9/20. Some Tibetan Buddhist orders allowed monks to marry.

32 FO535/23, 29, Encl. 3, P.O. Sikkim to Gvt. of India, 21/5/20.

33 FO535/24, 26, Encl. 10, Newsletter 2, 'Report on the Kansu Mission', 24/11/21. Charles Bell, *Portrait of the Dalai Lama*, pp. 215–17, Collins, London, 1946.

34 When the Dalai Lama was in India Bell wanted to help, but was unable to do anything in the face of opposition from London. Bell, *Portrait of the Dalai Lama*, pp. 249–50, 214–15.

35 FO535/24, 12, India Office to Foreign Office, 27/2/21; 15, India Office to Foreign Office, 12/2/21, Encl. 8 Gvt. of India to Bell, 10/1/21; 16, India Office to Foreign Office, 15/2/21; 24, Alston to Curzon, 5/3/21.

36 FO535/24, 15, India Office to Foreign Office, 12/2/21, Encl. 4 Bell to Gvt. of India, 21/12/20, Encl. 5 Lonchen Shatra to Bell P.O. Sikkim, 10/12/20 (trans.), Encl. 6 Bell to Gvt. of India, 3/1/21.

37 FO535/24, 50, India Office to Foreign Office, 18/5/21, Encl. 7 Bell to Gvt. of India, 5/4/21; 59, India Office to Foreign Office, 3/6/21, Encl. P.O. on Special Duty to Gvt. of India, Newsletter No. 10, Tibet and Nepal. FO535/25, 16, India Office to Foreign Office, 18/8/21, Encl. 1, P.O. on Special Duty to Gvt. of India, Newsletter No. 15. FO535/24, 21, India Office to Foreign Office, 26/8/21, Encl. 1 Bell to Gvt. of India (Confidential), 8/7/21. Bell, *Portrait of the Dalai Lama*, pp. 234–7, 276–7, 288–9, 292.

38 FO535/25, 50, India Office to Foreign Office, 29/10/21. Bell, *Portrait of the Dalai Lama*, p. 319.

39 FO535/26, 4, India Office to Foreign Office, 25/5/22, Encl. 1, Gvt. of India to India Office (secret), 23/3/22, Encl. 2, Final Report of Lhasa Mission, Nov. 1920–Oct. 1921. FO535/25, 45, India Office to Foreign Office, 21/10/21; FO535/24, 54, India Office to Foreign Office, 27/5/21, Encl. 1 Gvt. of India to India Office, 16/5/21. Bell, *Portrait of the Dalai Lama*, pp. 327–30, 341–2.

40 FO535/26, 4, India Office to Foreign Office, 25/5/22, Encl. 2 Final Report of the Lhasa Mission, Nov. 1920–Oct. 1921. A. Lamb, *Tibet, China and India, 1914–50: A History of Imperial Diplomacy*, p. 122, Roxford Books, Hertingfordbury, 1989.

41 The school at Gyantse lasted only a year. Tibetan requests to move the school to Lhasa were rejected on advice from Bell who argued that the city was politically unstable, an assessment based upon his own experiences there. The Everest expedition of 1924 was disgraced by the behaviour of some of its members who took turquoises from the foothills, upsetting the local people who believed that the spirits living beneath the earth would blame them for the theft.

42 FO535/23, 13, Lampson to Curzon, Encl. Report from the Consul-General, Chengtu, 7/4/20.

43 FO535/24, 32, Papers Communicated by the India Office, 7/4/21, (1) Bell to Gvt. of India (Confidential), 21/2/21. FO535/23, 13, Lampson to Curzon, Report from C.G. Chengtu, 7/4/20. FO228/2961, Reports from Ta-Chien-lu by Louis King, August 1919. Scott Berry, *Monks, Spies and a Soldier of Fortune: The Japanese in Tibet*, p. 159, Athlone Press Ltd, London, 1995.

44 FO535/23, 2, India Office to Foreign Office, 5/1/20, Encl. 3, Gvt. of India to Peking, 23/12/19, Encl. 4 Jordan to Curzon, 27/11/19.

45 FO535/23, 33, India Office to Foreign Office, 15/7/20, Encl. 2 Resident Nepal to Gvt. of India, 20/5/20.

46 FO535/23, 27, Encl. 13, 28/4/20. FO535/24, 48, Foreign Office to India Office, 9/5/21.

47 FO535/23, 18, India Office to Foreign Office, 28/4/20, Encl. Gvt. of India to India Office, 23/4/20. FO535/24, 19, Encl. 2 Bell to Gvt. of India, 21/1/21.

48 Jordan Papers, 350/6, Jordan to MaCleavy, 14/8/18. FO228/2960, 93, Consular Report, 10/6/20. FO535/23, Lampson to Curzon, 11/3/20; 27, Lampson to Curzon, 28/4/20; 17, Encl. in Letters to Gvt. of India from Foreign Office, 23/4/20; 17, Encl. in Letters to Gvt. of India from Foreign Office, 23/4/20. Lamb, *Tibet, China and India, 1914–50*, pp. 126–8, 140, note 248. According to Lamb, Bell was aware that King had been critical of the Tibetan stand in East Tibet and had received copies of King's reports, which reached India via Lhasa. Lamb also suspects that these reports were read by the Tibetans.
49 See Chapter 7, note 61.
50 FO535/23, 28, Alston to Curzon, 14/5/20; 32, Alston to Curzon, 24/4/20; 36, Alston to Curzon, 21/5/20.
51 FO535/24, 21, India Office to Foreign Office, 26/8/21, Encl. 1, Bell to Gvt. of India (Confidential), 8/7/21.
52 FO535/24, 64, Foreign Office to India Office, 24/6/21.
53 FO535/24, 54, India Office to Foreign Office, 27/5/21, Encl. Gvt. of India to India Office, 16/5/21. Bell revisited Lhasa between 1933 and 1935 as part of a wider tour of Mongolia, China, Manchuria and Siberia.
54 FO535/24, 64, Foreign Office to India Office, 24/6/21.

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Index